

'Najib lied to the world that money from 1MDB was a Saudi donation'

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KUALA LUMPUR: Former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak knew that money that flowed into his personal bank accounts belonged to 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB), but he lied to the world by saying that it was a donation from Saudi Arabia.

Deputy public prosecutor Datuk Seri Gopal Sri Ram said this in his opening statement in the 1MDB audit report tampering trial involving Najib and former 1MDB chief executive officer Arul Kanda Kandasamy yesterday.

He said the prosecution would show Najib's involvement in the case, which has come to be known as the 1MDB scandal.

He said Najib had supreme power over 1MDB, and the board

and management of the company were accustomed to act on his direction.

"He was the shadow director of 1MDB. As such, he would be both civilly and criminally liable for any breach of duty he owed the company.

"Monies belonging to 1MDB flowed into the account of a company called Good Star Ltd, which was controlled by Najib's mirror image or alter ego... a man called Low Taek Jho, or Jho Low, whom the accused was particularly protective of.

"Some of those monies also went to Najib's stepson, Riza Shahriz Abdul Aziz."

Sri Ram said Najib received large amounts of money belong-

ing to 1MDB, but had "lied to the world that they were a donation from Saudi Arabia".

"The adage is that the truth will be out. That happened here.

"Sometime in early July 2015, the 1MDB scandal broke. It received wide publicity and Najib began to cover his tracks," he said, adding that much of what Najib had done was the subject of his ongoing 1MDB trial.

On the audit report tampering case, Sri Ram said there were passages in the auditor general's report that caused concern to Najib even though they were true.

"He became nonplussed if not agitated and he took steps to have those passages altered or removed.

"What happened was abnormal. Although the report was ready to be placed before the Public Accounts Committee, a meeting was convened on Feb 24, 2016 at Najib's behest. It was chaired by the chief secretary to the government and, as a result of what transpired at the meeting, the passages were altered or removed."

Sri Ram said Arul Kanda had, before and after that meeting, abetted and aided Najib in the transaction.

He said the prosecution would, through direct and circumstantial evidence, prove the extent to which the accused went to remove material from an official record to prevent disclosure of the true state of affairs.

"Najib knew that if the truth emerged, he would be exposed to civil or criminal liability.

"The accused used his position as prime minister and finance minister to direct the removal of material information as specified in the charge against him."

He said the totality of evidence would lead to the "irresistible conclusion" that not only was the crime committed, but it was the accused who did it.

He, however, noted that the court might in the course of the trial hear from witnesses who might display an obvious bias in favour of the accused, but pointed out that their evidence was necessary for the unfolding of the prosecution's case.