

Najib's 1MDB trial vacated as defence team under quarantine over Covid-19 fears

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THE Kuala Lumpur High Court yesterday vacated Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Razak's 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) trial for the day as lead counsel Tan Sri Dr Muhammad Shafee Abdullah's defence team was said to be under self-imposed quarantine over Covid-19 fears.

Justice Collin Lawrence Sequerah allowed the trial to be vacated yesterday after a

representative from Messrs Shafee & Co, Noor Farhah Mustafa, informed the court that the whole 1MDB defence team is under self-imposed quarantine following a *kenduri* (family function) hosted by Muhammad Shafee at his house on March 7.

"At about 12 noon today, Tan Sri's wife received a call from her sister who works with a person who was just tested positive for Covid-19 in Sirim Bhd headquarters in Shah Alam.

"His sister-in-law and the infected colleague sat next to each other in the office. She (sister-in-law) has just been ordered to get tested for Covid-19 earlier today," said the lawyer yesterday, adding that the family function was attended by Muhammad Shafee's sister-in-law, as well as his 1MDB defence team.

On Wednesday, Sirim issued a statement to confirm that one of its employees has tested positive for Covid-19.

When Noor Farhah was speaking, the benches and tables reserved for Najib's defence team were empty, with Muhammad Shafee himself also absent. Najib was seen observing the proceedings from the dock.

Sequerah ruled that he would require two official letters from the defence team, one confirming that his sister-in-law has taken the test for Covid-19 and another instructing Muhammad Shafee's 1MDB team to be self-quarantined.



Najib is facing 4 charges of abusing his position to obtain gratification totalling RM2.3b in 1MDB funds and 21 counts of money laundering involving the same money

"Without these two letters, I don't see why the trial should not continue tomorrow," said Sequerah yesterday.

Datuk Seri Gopal Sri Ram, a former Federal Court judge leading the prosecution team, did not object to an adjournment.

Sri Ram said he was also asked to be tested due to his close contact with two patients under investigation of Covid-19.

"I am scheduled for a second test tomorrow. I understand the concern of the medical practitioners due to the speed of the virus spreading," he said.

In response to this, Sequerah said the virus is probably spreading faster than the speed of the 1MDB trial is proceeding.

When the hearing resumes, Muhammad Shafee is expected to continue cross-examining the ninth prosecution witness, former 1MDB CEO Datuk Shahrol Azral Ibrahim Halmi.

Najib, 67, faces four charges of abusing his position to obtain gratification totalling RM2.3 billion in 1MDB funds and 21 counts of money laundering involving the same money.

The hearing continues today. — Bernama

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