

Separate courts for Najib and Zahid

Former, current Umno chiefs have criminal cases in different High Courts

KUALA LUMPUR: Both former and current Umno presidents are expected to be in the dock for criminal cases at separate High Courts here.

Datuk Seri Najib Razak's joint trial with former 1Malaysia Development Bhd CEO Arul Kanda Kandasamy, for tampering with the 1MDB audit report before the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), is scheduled to start today.

But whether the case proceeds depends on Justice Mohamed Zaini Mazlan, who will deliver his decision on Najib's application for the trial dates to be moved to Jan 13, 2020.

Prior to this, the judge had directed all parties to be prepared for the trial if he disallowed the application. He had also fixed Nov 18 to 29 and Jan 13 to 17 for the trial.

Najib, 66, is currently preparing to enter his defence in the SRC International Sdn Bhd case, where he is accused of seven charges of misappropriating RM42mil in SRC funds at another High Court. The case will resume on Dec 3.

The former prime minister and Umno president is also facing four charges of using his position to obtain bribes totalling RM2.3bil from 1MDB funds and 21 charges of money laundering involving the same amount in a different court.

The trial is set to resume on Jan 6.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Ahmad Akram Gharib, when contacted, said the prosecution is ready with three to five formal witnesses if the judge decides to begin the trial today.

In his Nov 13 application, Najib said if the (audit report tampering) trial was to proceed as scheduled, he would suffer prejudice as his lawyers and he would require a reasonable and sufficient amount of time to prepare for his defence in the SRC case.

He also stated in the application that his defence team, at the same time, was also involved in the preparation of the other ongoing 1MDB case which started on Aug 28.

However, Arul Kanda objected to Najib's application and had asked the court to proceed with the trial as he wanted to clear his name.

On Dec 12, 2018, Najib was charged with using his position to order amendments to the 1MDB final audit report before it was tabled to the PAC to avoid any action against him.

He was charged with using the position to obtain gratification for himself, which was to evade disciplinary, civil or criminal action against him by ordering alterations to the 1MDB final audit report.

If convicted, Najib faces a maximum jail term of 20 years and a fine of no less than five

times the amount of gratification or RM10,000, whichever is higher.

Arul Kanda was charged with abetting Najib in making amendments to the report to protect Najib and could face the same penalties if found guilty.

Meanwhile, the trial of Umno president-Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, who is facing 47 charges involving millions of ringgit from a foundation, will be heard before Justice Collin Lawrence Sequerah.

The former deputy prime minister had claimed trial to 12 charges for criminal breach of trust (CBT), eight for bribery and 27 for money laundering involving tens of millions of ringgit belonging to Yayasan Akalbudi.

On March 22, DPP Datuk Raja Rozela Raja Toran informed the court that the prosecution would call 20 witnesses to testify.

For the CBT charges, Ahmad Zahid had allegedly used the funds to make six payments for personal credit cards, insurance policy and licence for his personal vehicles, remittances to a law firm and contributions to the Royal Malaysia Police football association.

He is alleged to have committed the offences between Jan 13, 2014 and Dec 23, 2016.

The charges under the Penal Code provide

for a jail term of between two and 20 years, and with whipping, and fine, upon conviction.

Ahmad Zahid was also charged with eight counts of accepting bribes from three companies, namely Mastoro Kenny IT Consultant & Services, Data Sonic Group Bhd and Profound Radiance Sdn Bhd as an inducement for him, in his capacity as then Home Minister, to help the companies to obtain MyEG projects, supply passport chips and to be appointed the operator of migrant visa one-stop centres in Pakistan and Nepal respectively.

He is accused of having committed all the offences between July 15, 2016 and March 15, 2018.

If convicted, he is liable to a jail term of up to 20 years and a fine of not less than five times the bribe amount or RM10,000, whichever is higher.

The Bagan Datuk MP's 27 charges of money laundering are related to engaging in direct transactions involving income from illegal activities between March 29, 2016 and April 11, 2018.

If convicted he faces a maximum 15-year jail term and a fine of up to five times of the income from the illegal activities or RM5 million, whichever is higher. — Bernama

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