

'Najib had turned a blind eye'

Prosecutor: He should have questioned source of money in accounts

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PUTRAJAYA: The Court of Appeal was told that former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak had turned a blind eye to the millions of ringgit that entered his personal bank accounts.

Instead of enquiring where the money came from, the Pekan MP had "immediately utilised" the money by issuing cheques for personal and political uses, moved millions between two companies, and gone on a shopping spree at Swiss luxury jeweller boutique De Grisogono in Italy and designer boutique Chanel in Honolulu, the United States.

Ad hoc prosecutor Datuk V. Sithambaram said this in his submission at the hearing of an appeal filed by Najib against his conviction and sentence in the SRC International Sdn Bhd case here yesterday.

During the trial, the High Court was told that Najib had spent about

RM3.3mil at De Grisogono to buy a gift meant for the wife of Qatar's former prime minister and bought a RM466,000 (US\$130,625) Chanel watch for his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor.

Sithambaram said the lavish expenditure by the appellant proved his knowledge of the RM42mil - which was the subject matter of the charges against him - from SRC entering his personal bank accounts.

With such huge amounts of money flowing in, he said Najib ought to have at least made enquiries as to the source and legality of these funds but he turned a blind eye to the millions in his accounts, solely on the grounds that he had appointed former SRC International CEO Nik Faisal Ariff Kamil to manage his bank accounts.

The failure to enquire, said Sithambaram, was indeed an act of wilful blindness.

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unbelievable," he added.

The prosecutor said even as the source of funds was being investigated by the authorities, Najib continued to remain passive and did not attempt to make enquiries with AmBank or to lodge any police reports on the funds deposited.

"When he was told that the funds were from SRC, he, again, did not do anything," Sithambaram said.

The court also heard that Najib's defence that he believed he had received funds from the Saudi King's donation was nothing short of a weak fabrication and self-serving evidence.

He said there were inconsistencies and contradictions in Najib's evidence regarding a purported meeting with the late King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia.

Najib's defence had maintained that the Arab donations were a pledge of support from the late King, which occurred at a personal meeting arranged by fugitive financier Low Taek Jho, better known as Jho Low, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Jan 11, 2010.

Sithambaram said Najib did not testify of the purported pledge by the King to him, which was the most important detail of the whole visit and the most vital piece of evidence for his own defence.

"It is the respondent's contention

that the said details could not have been inadvertently left out from the appellant's witness statement or his evidence in court," he added.

The prosecution also questioned the alleged close relationship between Low and the royal family, as claimed by Najib, that Low was able to arrange the meeting.

"Looking at it, I think we need Jho Low to be our minister of foreign affairs since he is the one arranging things," Sithambaram said.

On July 28 last year, the Kuala Lumpur High Court sentenced Najib to 10 years' jail on each of the three counts of criminal breach of trust as well as each of the three counts of money laundering.

Najib, 68, is currently out on bail of RM2mil in two sureties pending appeal.

The appeal hearing continues today before a three-man panel.