

Judge takes Najib's lawyer and bailor to task

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PUTRAJAYA: A lawyer from Datuk Seri Najib Razak's defence team received an earful from a Court of Appeal judge over the absence of the former prime minister and the rest of the team.

Justice Abdul Karim Abdul Jalil was clearly annoyed as the defence team was not present in court with the exception of one lawyer, Harvinder Singh Sidhu from Messrs Shafee & Co, who appeared on behalf of the Pekan MP.

The hearing yesterday was for Najib's application to adduce new evidence relating to the SRC International Sdn Bhd appeal.

The judge also called for Najib's bailor, Faizal Shamsuddin, to step

forward to ask about Najib's whereabouts.

Najib's second bailor, Alias Yahya, was "on the way" to the court.

"Where is Najib? Why is he not at the court? The responsibility of the bailor is heavy. You have to ensure that he is here.

"If we are dissatisfied, we can revoke bail and issue an arrest warrant for him," the judge said.

Other judges on the panel were Justices Has Zanah Mehat and Vazeer Alam Mydin Meera.

The panel was earlier informed by Harvinder that one of the team members in the defence tested positive for Covid-19 and Najib was a close contact.

Harvinder also asked the court to postpone the hearing of the application as well as the decision in the SRC International appeal which has been fixed for today.

Ad hoc prosecutor Datuk V. Sithambaram told the court that the prosecution was "shocked" by the turn of events.

"This appears to be a last-minute attempt to scuttle the hearing and depending on the outcome, the decision," he said.

Sithambaram said there were already attempts to postpone the proceedings in the past but these had failed.

He also pointed out that Najib's lead lawyer Tan Sri Muhammad

Shafee Abdullah was only a casual contact and the defence could proceed with the hearing of their own application online.

"Justice is for both parties, for the prosecution who represents the public interest and also for the accused," he added.

Harvinder, however, told the court that they could not proceed via Zoom as the submissions for the hearing were not ready due to the Covid-19 scare that took place in the legal firm.

"We are at a disadvantage. If we were to proceed by Zoom, we cannot do it today," he added.

Justice Abdul Karim said the court had two options: to revoke

Najib's bail and issue a warrant of arrest or order for the proceedings to continue online in the afternoon.

"The courts have enough experience to handle proceedings online. We have done proceedings even when parties are in the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan.

"This is my direction, the case will be heard at 12.30pm. Failing which, we will decide this afternoon," he said.

The hearing later proceeded in the afternoon where the panel heard lengthy submissions from both parties. Najib also participated in the Zoom proceedings.