

# JUDGE URGED TO ISSUE STERN WARNING

Lead prosecutor says ex-PM's action amounted to attacking potential trial witnesses

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FORMER prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak was yesterday rebuked by the prosecution for conducting his defence against 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) charges through his Facebook postings.

Lead prosecutor Datuk Seri Gopal Sri Ram urged High Court judge Collin Lawrence Sequerah to issue a stern warning to the Pekan member of parliament to stop doing so immediately, in the wake of Najib's recent postings involving former Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) governor Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz.

He said Najib's action had interfered with the administration of justice as potential witnesses in the trial were being attacked by the accused.

Citing Najib's Facebook postings involving Zeti, Sri Ram said the accused had attacked one of the witnesses slated to testify in the 1MDB trial.

"We make strong objection to this. This trial should be conducted in the court and not through social media.

"This is not the first time he is doing this... He previously said he would not (be able to) get a fair trial but later explained himself when directed to do so. The court accepted his explanation then,

but he is now doing this," he said.

Sri Ram said Najib must not be allowed to continue attacking Zeti.

He said while the prosecution did not want to make an application to revoke Najib's bail, it wanted the court to issue a stern warning to the accused to stop attacking witnesses in the trial.

However, Najib's lead counsel Tan Sri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah argued that his client had been subjected to all kinds of attacks, including being called all sorts of names by everyone from former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to others.

He questioned why the prosecution did not make an issue of this and also never condemned a recent posting by Swiss national Xavier Andre Justo, who had commented about the trial and Najib's alleged role in it.

Shafee said Dr Mahathir had even upload Justo's statement on his site.

"We are put in a predicament here. Everybody else can make all kinds of statements against my client, but he is told to shut up.

"It is as if he is asked to enter a boxing ring with his hands tied behind his back... He is expected to take all the punches thrown at him, but he is not allowed to fight back."

Shafee said all Najib had done was asking Zeti to come clean about accusations that she and her family had received funds from 1MDB arranged by fugitive businessman Low Taek Jho @ Jho Low.

The senior lawyer said Najib just wanted Zeti to respond to such allegations, which were first raised by blogger Raja Petra Kamaruddin and also news portal Free Malaysia Today (FMT).

Raja Petra, in a Dec 28 posting,



Former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak entering the High Court in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. PIC BY HAIRUL ANUAR RAHIM

claimed that some of Zeti's family members had received over RM100 million from Jho Low, who is said to be the mastermind behind the 1MDB scandal.

FMT, meanwhile, reported that Zeti's husband and their two sons had admitted to knowing about the money in statutory declarations (SDs) signed in March last year.

The money was in the accounts of Cutting Edge Industries in Singapore, and the three admitted to being the beneficial owners of the accounts. FMT also said the SDs had been certified to be authentic by the attesting lawyers.

Zeti has since denied the allegations that she and her family received funds from 1MDB, voicing concern about the untrue me-

dia reports against her and her family.

She said issues relating to 1MDB had been thoroughly investigated by the authorities, namely BNM, police and the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission.

"I have given my fullest cooperation and provided police and MACC with all the necessary information in relation to the official investigations concerning 1MDB and the former prime minister.

"I am unable to make any further statement as I am a potential witness in the ongoing trial of the former prime minister," she said, reiterating that she and her family had never received any sum of

money from 1MDB.

Meanwhile, Shafee said he had since written to the Monetary Authority of Singapore and also "a very senior Malaysian lawyer", who he did not wish to name, about the SDs which had been prepared by Zeti's husband and their two sons.

He said the SDs confirmed what had been written about Zeti's family. Shafee requested for more time to prepare his submissions to counter Sri Ram's application for the court to issue a warning to Najib.

The court allowed the defence's application to hand in a written submission over the matter before a decision is made on the prosecution's application.