

COURT ISSUES STERN WARNING TO NAJIB

Ex-PM told not to upload postings on social media attacking potential witnesses

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THE High Court yesterday warned Datuk Seri Najib Razak against uploading any more postings attacking potential witnesses in his ongoing 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) trial.

High Court judge Collin Lawrence Sequerah warned the former prime minister not to repeat attacks against witnesses as he had done through his Facebook posting on former Bank Negara governor Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz.

"The accused cannot conduct his trial through the public domain. His posting on Zeti amounted to an attack against a witness.

"This court issues a stern warning to the accused not to repeat it. I will take the necessary action to protect the integrity of this trial if it happens again," he said.

Justice Collin said this after hearing arguments from both sides on whether Najib should be warned about his Facebook posting concerning Zeti.

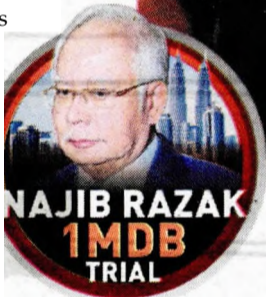
The prosecution had previously applied for the court to warn Najib against conducting his defence on the 1MDB case through his Facebook postings.

Lead prosecutor Datuk Seri Gopal Sri Ram had urged the court to issue a stern warning to the Pekan member of parliament to stop doing so immediately.

This came in the wake of Najib's recent postings involving Zeti. Sri Ram said Najib's action had interfered with the administration of justice as potential witnesses in the trial were being attacked by the accused.

On the defence's arguments that Zeti had also made statements about the 1MDB scandal, Collin said she had not touched on anything about the ongoing trial.

He added that whatever Zeti said in her media interviews raised by the defence did not war-



Datuk Seri Najib Razak arriving at the High Court in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. PIC BY ASWADI ALIAS

rant Najib's attack on her.

Earlier, deputy public prosecutor Mohd Akram Abdul Gharib said Najib had resorted to conducting his defence in social media by trying to portray Zeti as a witness who was not credible.

He refuted Shafee's claims that Najib was merely asking Zeti to explain allegations against her and her family members in his Facebook postings.

"He is not doing that. On the contrary, he is actually conducting his defence in the public by attacking someone who has been listed as a witness in this trial.

"He wants to show that she is a liar even before she is called to testify," he said, adding that Najib's lawyers had every opportunity to call Zeti to be grilled during the SRC International Bhd trial but they never did it.

Akram also rebutted Shafee's

arguments that it was Zeti who had attacked Najib first through media interviews in 2019.

He said Zeti only touched on the economy and had responded to questions posed by the reporter.

"Nothing in the two articles raised by the defence amounts to an attack against Najib," he argued.

Earlier, Shafee protested that Najib had done nothing wrong through his postings.

He also complained that the prosecution seemed to be practising double standards by only urging the court to act against Najib but did nothing when others, including Zeti, had uploaded nasty things against his client.

The senior lawyer argued that it was Zeti who had first started making public comments against Najib.

Shafee said all Najib had done was ask Zeti to come clean about accusations that she and her fam-

ily 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 the allegations, which were first raised by blogger Raja Petra Kamaruddin and also news portal Free Malaysia Today (FMT).

The blogger, in a Dec 28 posting, 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 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 allegations that she and her family received funds from 1MDB, voicing concern over the untrue media reports against her and her family.

She said issues relating to 1MDB had been fully and thoroughly investigated by the authorities, namely Bank Negara Malaysia, police and the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC).

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

"I am unable to make any further statements 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.