

# 'JHO LOW USED TO CALL NAJIB BOSS'

Former 1MDB director reveals close relations between ex-PM and fugitive financier

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**T**HE High Court yesterday heard about Datuk Seri Najib Razak's close relationship with Low Taek Jho and also how the former prime minister pressed for the issuance of RM5 billion bonds to proceed despite the then king's directive.

Former 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) director Tan Sri Ismee Ismail unveiled the close relationship between Najib and Low, popularly known as Jho Low, describing it as "very good" with the fugitive financier often referring to the then prime minister as boss.

Ismee, 57, who was testifying in Najib's trial over the misappropriation of RM2.28 billion funds from 1MDB, said Low dropped Najib's name all the time when he dealt with the 1MDB management and board members. He said this resulted in the 1MDB board following whatever that was suggested by Low

without question.

Ismee cited an official trip to Abu Dhabi (in the United Arab Emirates) to illustrate the close relationship between Low and Najib. He said he was part of the official entourage, which included those in Najib's cabinet then, namely Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, Datuk Seri Nazri Abdul Aziz, former chief secretary to the government Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa and former 1MDB director Tan Sri Lodin Wok Kamarudin.

"When we arrived, Low was there waiting for us. The visit had been arranged for us to look at a model of a mosque, which would be built in Malaysia on a joint venture between 1MDB and Aabar Investments PJS.

"We were given a grand welcome with a military airshow and all," he said, adding that Low had even managed to help Malaysia secure an additional 10,000 haj quota for Malaysian pilgrims after that.

Ismee said he first got to know Low when he was invited to be part of the steering committee for the precursor to 1MDB, the Terengganu Investment Authority (TIA).

He said this happened when he was invited to meet with Tuanku

Mizan Zainal Abidin at Istana Terengganu in early 2009.

"TIA was formed to attract investments to Terengganu, especially for the development of Pulau Bidong as a tourist destination.

"I later realised that Low was acting as an adviser to Najib and he often dropped the (then) prime minister's name whenever he proposed things.

"He used to refer to Najib as boss and PM."

Ismee said Low also often sent e-mails to the 1MDB board even though he had no role in the management of the strategic development firm.

He added that since everyone knew the close relations between Low and Najib, the former's proposals were always taken

seriously.

Ismee also revealed how Najib wanted the issuance of TIA's RM5 billion bonds to proceed even after then Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin had directed for it to be discontinued.

Relating how events during the period unfolded, Ismee said he had been summoned to meet the king at Istana Terengganu on May 22, 2009.

He said also present at the



Low Taek Jho



Former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak arriving at the High Court in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. PIC BY SAIFULLIZAN TAMADI.

palace on that day were former 1MDB chief executive Datuk Shahrol Azral Ibrahim Halimi and Tuanku Mizan's sister, Tengku Rahimah.

Ismee said the meeting started with Tuanku Mizan informing those present that his interest and concern was only for the well being of his state and the Terengganu people.

"He then directed us to discontinue with the issuance of the RM5 billion Islamic Medium Term Notes (IMTN).

"He also ordered us to sign a resolution to this effect and we did it. I did not question his directive as that was what he wanted us to do."

Ismee said they left after that and it was then that Shahrol spoke up.

He said Shahrol expressed concern over what had been directed by the palace, lamenting that it was too late to do so.

"Shahrol told me there was no way we could discontinue the issuance of the IMTN.

"He said the button had al-

ready been pushed. I just told him to manage and settle the problem."

Ismee said immediately after that, he and Shahrol were summoned to Najib's house in Jalan Langgak Duta, where the (then) prime minister was briefed on what happened at the palace.

He said Najib's immediate response was to ask them why they had signed the resolution instead of trying to buy time from the ruler.

Ismee said he could only respond by telling Najib that it was a directive from the king.

"However, I could see from Najib's reaction that he wanted the issuance of the bonds to proceed."

Najib, 68, is charged with 25 counts of abuse of power and money laundering involving RM2.28 billion of 1MDB funds, which were deposited into his accounts between 2011 and 2014.

The trial before High Court judge Datuk Collin Lawrence Sequerah continues.