

Najib wielded 'ultimate power'

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Ex-PM decided on every important decision in 1MDB, witness tells court

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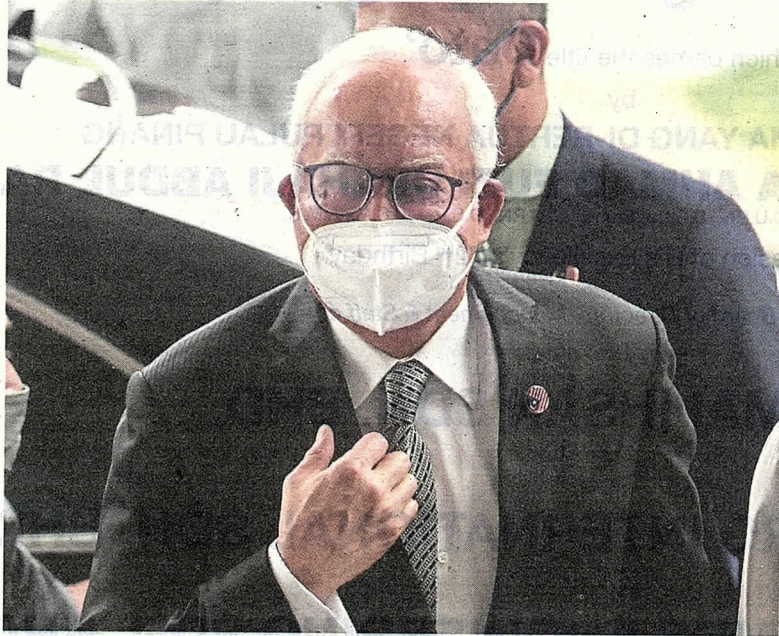
KUALA LUMPUR: Former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak had the "ultimate power" in 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) when it came to the company's decision-making, says its former chief financial officer.

Azmi Tahir, 48, testified at the High Court that the said power was in line with Article 117 of the Memorandum & Articles of Association (M&A) of the company whereby every important decision must be under the instruction or the approval of the prime minister.

"Najib is the person with the ultimate power in every decision particularly involving investment, financial decision and national interest," he said in his 127-page witness statement.

His testimony echoed those of his former colleagues who were former 1MDB CEOs, namely Datuk Shahrol Azral Ibrahim Halimi, 51, and Mohd Hazem Abd Rahman, 49.

Azmi said during his time as the CFO, there were "confidential moves" that were planned by fugitive businessman Low Taek Jho, or Jho Low, with the instructions and



Day in court: Najib, seen here outside the court in Kuala Lumpur, is facing four charges of abusing his position to obtain gratification totalling RM2.28bil in 1MDB funds and 21 counts of money laundering. — KAMARUL ARIFFIN/The Star

"blessings" of Najib.

"Selected people were chosen and arranged at the highest management of 1MDB and the board of directors (BOD) to ensure that these

moves and backdoor instructions were carried out," he added.

The witness said he was one of those who had "worked in silos" while the rest were Mohd Hazem

(who was the COO at the time), Shahrol, Vincent Koh (chief investment officer), Jasmine Loo (general counsel) and Terence Geh (deputy CFO).

"Low told me that all assignments were on a need-to-know basis," Azmi said.

As the working culture was of a "work-in-silo" type, the instructions were only known by people inside the layered system, coordinated by Low and Najib's former principal private secretary Datuk Azlin Alias, he said.

"The instructions I received from them (Low and Azlin) were in the form of a mandate from Najib as the prime minister.

"Therefore, the officers in the layered system have to follow Low's instructions because his instructions are Najib's instructions, in line with Article 117," he added.

Azmi, whose previous position was in corporate finance at Deloitte, began working at 1MDB as the CFO on June 1, 2012, where he drew a monthly salary of between RM40,000 and RM45,000.

"I am no longer working at any company and am self-employed," he said.

Azmi also told the court that he was introduced to Low, who was "Najib's 1MDB adviser", in a meet-

ing that was arranged by Azlin.

The meeting took place at Low's office in KLCC in June 2012 after Azmi joined 1MDB. Azlin did not attend the meeting.

"I was told in this meeting that all the instructions from Azlin and Low were mandates from Najib and I only needed to follow them.

"After the meeting, I confirmed with Azlin whether what Low said was true and applicable. Azlin confirmed what Low told me.

"From then on, I would carry out any instructions from Azlin and Low because I believed those instructions were mandates from Najib," he said.

During the testimony, Najib's lawyer Wan Aizuddin Wan Mohammed stood up to raise objections over Azmi's statement several times, saying that the witness' testimony was "hearsay".

Justice Collin Lawrence Sequerah, however, said the court would deal with the objections during the oral submission stage of the trial.

Najib, 68, is facing four charges of abusing his position to obtain gratification totalling RM2.28bil in 1MDB funds and 21 counts of money laundering involving the same money.

The hearing continues on Monday.