

# Najib appoints new lawyers for SRC case and seeks postponement

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Datuk Seri Najib Razak has appointed new defence lawyers to represent him in the SRC International Sdn Bhd case less than three weeks before the hearing of his final appeal at the Federal Court.

The unexpected move came with him discharging his long-term law firm, Messrs Shafee & Co, from representing him in his final bid to challenge the SRC conviction and sentence.

Following the change, former prime minister Najib is also seeking to postpone the 10-day hearing of the main appeal, which had been set to begin on Aug 15.

The Federal Court was informed of the matter in a letter dated July 26 from Messrs Zaid Ibrahim Suflan TH Liew & Partners (ZIST), the new law firm representing Najib in the

appeal, with senior lawyer Hisyam Teh Poh Teik leading the appeal.

"Hisyam from Messrs Hisyam Teh will be the main counsel.

"Liew Teck Huat and Rueben Mathiaravanam, both from ZIST, will be co-counsels," said the letter, signed by Liew as the firm's senior partner.

Hisyam is currently the lead counsel in the corruption case of Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, who is facing 47 charges of corruption involving Yayasan Akalbudi (YAB).

The letter also sought for the apex court to fix an immediate mention date or a case management date for the parties to obtain further instructions from the court.

"Depending on the court, we humbly request a mention date or a case management date to be fixed on or before July 29," Liew wrote.

He also stated that the firm

received instructions from Najib to withdraw a pending appeal against a recent High Court's decision that dismissed an application by British Queen's Counsel (QC) Jonathan Laidlaw, who sought to be admitted as an advocate and solicitor on an ad-hoc basis in the High Court of Malaya.

This was to allow Laidlaw to represent Najib in the SRC appeal as the main counsel, but the High Court dismissed Laidlaw's application on July 21.

The firm said it also received instructions to seek a postponement of the main appeal.

Shafee & Co also wrote to the Federal Court to inform them of the notice of discharge given to them by Najib.

The law firm said it received a letter from the appellant (Najib) at around 5pm on July 25.

Najib's letter stated that Shafee & Co was discharged immediately

from acting as a counsel representing him (Najib) in the SRC appeal and related proceedings.

Shafee & Co said it persevered to complete the handing over of physical and digital documents to ZIST, and it is expected to be done by Tuesday.

Shafee and his team have been on Najib's defence team in the SRC trial since the beginning of the case in July 2018.

Meanwhile, Najib said Shafee & Co and its lawyer, Shafee, would continue as the solicitor and counsel in all other cases involving himself before the Malaysian courts.

"It is unjust for the media to conclude or report that Shafee and Co have been 'evicted' or 'ditched'," he said in a brief statement.

Najib currently has two other ongoing criminal trials - the RM2.28bil 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) trial and the 1MDB audit tampering trial - where

Shafee remains as the lead counsel.

He said the change in the line-up of defence lawyers came after the failure of QC Laidlaw to appear as the main counsel in the final appeal and that he had consulted lawyers in Singapore and the Indian Senior Advocates on the matter before the change.

Najib also said he was confident that the new team would bring different perspectives to his defence.

On July 28, 2020, Justice Mohd Nazlan Mohd Ghazali (now a Court of Appeal judge) convicted and sentenced Najib on seven charges involving criminal breach of trust (CBT), money laundering and abuse of position involving SRC funds totalling RM42mil.

He was sentenced to 12 years in jail and a fine of RM210mil.

The Court of Appeal upheld the conviction and sentence.

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