

'NAJIB CALLED ME BEFORE PAC HEARING'

Bakke: Najib wanted statements to panel to be in 'harmony'

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THE former chairman of 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) yesterday revealed how he had told Datuk Seri Najib Razak that it was best for him not to testify before the 2016 Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC) inquiry if he was required to sugarcoat things involving the troubled wealth fund.

Tan Sri Mohd Bakke Salleh said Najib had called him two weeks before he was scheduled to testify before the committee, asking him to meet the then PAC chairman Datuk Seri Hasan Arifin.

"(Najib) told me that he just wanted to make sure the way we responded to the PAC questions would be in harmony.



"Some kind of agreement that, I would say, is acceptable to the prime minister.

"However, I told him that his concerns would be allayed if I was not called to testify at all. Because by not appearing, I won't say anything.

"But he said it is too late, you still have to appear."

Bakke testified on Wednesday that he met Hasan twice before the committee convened the hearings and the latter had essentially told him not to link Najib and Low Taek Jho @ Jho Low to the mess 1MDB had dug itself into.

The 68-year-old, who was tes-

tifying in Najib's trial where the former prime minister is accused of misappropriating RM2.3 billion of 1MDB funds, said those who attended the meetings included Datuk Seri Ahmad Farid Ridzuan, who was then in charge of Najib's brand image, as well as former 1MDB chief executives Datuk Shahrol Azral Ibrahim Halimi (at the first meeting) and Arul Kanda Kandasamy (at the second meeting).

The meetings, he said, took place at Farid's residence in Kiara Hills.

To a question by lead prosecutor Datuk Seri Gopal Sri Ram on what were the common things that had to be said or avoided at the PAC inquiry, Bakke said:

"The thing that had to be said was, you know, that all these irregularities and shenanigans happened (in 1MDB) because of the management's oversight and non-compliance with good corporate governance and all that.

"That was the direction — avoid making any reference to the PM and also Jho Low. Yeah, so

that was what happened."

To another question on why he did not complain to the Finance Ministry about the irregularities happening in 1MDB when he resigned, Bakke said this was because he always suspected that Najib had a role in it all.

Sri Ram: Like complaining about the lost sheep to the wolf.

Bakke: Maybe I should have done so. (Should have) been bold enough to say, whether PM or not. Stick out my neck.

Earlier, to a question from lead defence counsel Tan Sri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah, Bakke denied that the 1MDB board did not do anything after discovering the wrongdoings in 1MDB.

He said the board had initiated queries about the management's non-compliance with directives, but they never got the full information, right until the time he resigned.

Bakke also disagreed that he had eventually taken the easy way out by simply walking away

from 1MDB by resigning.

Asked on his relationship with Najib right from the time the latter was deputy prime minister, Bakke acknowledged that they had good relations.

He noted that he could have raised his unhappiness about the issues unravelling in 1MDB, but never did so.

He also agreed that it was not Najib's personality to push others to do anything, before Shafee cited several examples of how the Pekan member of parliament had left it to Bakke to manage Felda FGV affairs.

Bakke, who was then heading Felda FGV, acknowledged that one such instance was when Indonesian businessman Tan Sri Peter Sondakh had proposed the sale of a plantation at an inflated valuation rate.

He agreed that the matter had been subsequently referred to Najib, and the latter had then left it to Bakke to decide on what was best for Felda FGV.

The trial before High Court judge Datuk Collin Lawrence Sequerah will resume on June 7.