

Signing off under pressure

Witness describes Najib's order on 1MDB audit as 'intimidation'

KUALA LUMPUR: The instruction by Datuk Seri Najib Razak to an audit firm to complete and sign off on its audit of 1Malaysia Development Bhd's (1MDB) 2013 financial statement within two weeks was described in court as a form of intimidation.

KPMG Malaysia managing partner Datuk Johan Idris said this when re-examined by lead prosecutor Datuk Seri Gopal Sri Ram at the former premier's trial yesterday over the alleged misappropriation of RM2.3bil of 1MDB funds.

The 14th prosecution witness was queried about the meeting which took place on the night of Dec 15, 2013, at Najib's residence in Jalan Langgak Duta here.

The 45-minute meeting was between KPMG with Johan as its sole representative, 1MDB and Najib himself.

Sri Ram: You were asked to confirm that the minutes of the meeting do not show there was any pressure exerted by the accused Najib upon you at this meeting. You were there, at ground zero, so was there any pressure at all?

Johan: I put it (as) intimidation.... Intimidation for us to conclude and signed the audit statement ending March 31, 2013.

Sri Ram: From whom did this come?

Johan: Najib.

At this juncture, Najib's counsel Wan Aizuddin Wan Mohammed stood up and objected to the witness's answer as the word 'intimidation' was never raised by the wit-



Court case: Najib walking out of the court complex in Jalan Duta after attending his trial in connection with 1MDB. — Bernama

ness in any of his answers.

However, High Court Judge Datuk Collin Lawrence Sequerah asked the defence to put forth its submissions.

Previously, the court heard that KPMG had yet to sign off on the audit for 1MDB's financial statement for the financial year ending March 31, 2013; as 1MDB had yet to provide the information that KPMG had been asking for since April 2013.

Based on the minutes of the meeting that Johan had typed out himself, he noted that Najib had asked for KPMG to sign the audit by Dec 31, 2013.

Najib, 68, is facing four charges of using his position to obtain bribes totalling RM2.3bil from 1MDB funds and 21 charges of money laundering involving the same amount.

Separately, the high court was

also told that the 1MDB board of directors held a meeting in London on May 16, 2011 to discuss the agreement regarding the additional RMBil 1MDB-PetroSaudi investment joint venture under the Murabaha financing scheme.

Former 1MDB company secretary Goh Gaik Kim, 54, said arrangements to hold the meeting at Hilton Hotel, London were made by the 1MDB management.

Also present at the meeting were Tan Sri Che Lodin Wok Kamaruddin, Datuk Shahrol Azral Ibrahim Halmi, Tan Sri Ismee Ismail, Jasmine Loo Ai Swan and Ashvin Jethanand.

Referring to the meeting's minutes dated May 16, 2011, she said that before the meeting began, Loo, who was the lawyer for 1MDB, had handed three sets of documents to her for safekeeping, the Board of Directors' Resolution, the Ordinary

Shareholders' Resolution and the Preferred Shareholders' Resolution.

"The documents relate to the investment of an additional RMBil under the Murabaha Financing Agreement with 1MDB PetroSaudi.

"All the documents were already signed by the 1MDB board of directors and Datuk Seri Najib. However, the matter (the documents) was not discussed during the meeting," she said.

She testified that at the meeting, the several important matters discussed included the presentation made by Loo about the Murabaha financing scheme.

Goh, who is now the company secretary for TRX City Sdn Bhd, said that she returned to Malaysia the following day after the meeting.

"I received the itinerary of the visit. As I recall, there were some events held before and after the board of directors' meeting, but I only attended the board of directors' meeting," said the witness, who served as company secretary for 1MDB from March 31, 2011 before resigning on April 1, 2016.

During proceedings in 2019, former 1MDB chief executive officer Shahrol Azral told the court that Najib had approved an additional RM1bill in funds in 2011 under the 1MDB-PetroSaudi joint venture.

The trial before Justice Sequerah continues. — Bernama