

Najib fails in bid to recuse judge over threat of bias

By **NURBAITI HAMDAN**
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Najib Razak has failed to recuse Justice Collin Lawrence Sequerah from presiding over his RM2.28bil 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) trial after the former prime minister's recusal application was dismissed.

Justice Sequerah, in his decision, said Najib did not succeed in proving the burden of real danger of bias.

On July 26, Justice Sequerah revealed that he worked with former 1MDB general counsel Jasmine Loo in the same legal firm years ago after her name was brought up in the trial.

Yesterday, the Court of Appeal judge said that since Loo left the firm on Dec 31, 2008, there has been no communication or meeting - either on a professional or personal level - between him and Loo.



Another day in court:

Najib arriving at the Court Complex in Kuala Lumpur for the 1MDB trial. - Bernama

"Since Loo's departure, no material has been placed before the court to show any form of relationship, whether professional or personal, and some 15 years has now elapsed.

"I do not think there's another material place before this court that the applicant (Najib) has

succeeded in discharging the burden that there is real danger of bias should I continue hearing this case if Loo becomes a witness, that I will not be able to objectively evaluate her credibility as a witness in an unbiased manner, either on a conscious or subconscious level,"

he added.

Justice Sequerah also agreed with the prosecution's submission that there was no necessity on his part to disclose his past employment in Messrs Zain & Co.

"The decision is that in the premises and for the reasons expressed above, the application to recuse is hereby dismissed," he said.

Loo was considered a fugitive and believed to have been living overseas for years until recently, when she came into Malaysian police custody.

This prompted Najib to file a notice of motion on Aug 14 to recuse the judge from presiding over the case.

Najib, 70, is on trial for 25 charges in total - four for abuse of power that allegedly brought him financial benefit to the tune of RM2.28bil, and 21 for money laundering involving the same amount of money.

The trial continues.