

Zarul had never met Najib

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Money meant for ex-PM given to middleman, says key witness

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KUALA LUMPUR: Despite handing over RM19mil to a middleman to be given to then prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, a key prosecution witness in the corruption trial involving Lim Guan Eng said he had never met the former premier.

Consortium Zenith Construction Sdn Bhd (CZCSB) executive director Datuk Zarul Ahmad Mohd Zulkifli told the Sessions Court that he gave the money to businessman G. Gnanaraja.

Zarul Ahmad said when questioned by Lim's counsel RSN Rayer, that the payments were meant for Najib, although he had never met the former premier himself.

The origins of a RM2mil sum that Zarul Ahmad had given to Gnanaraja in 2017 that was meant for Najib also became the point of contention in yesterday's proceeding.

Lim's lead counsel Haijan Omar pointed out there were material contradictions as Zarul Ahmad had earlier told the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) that he borrowed RM2.3mil from one of his business partners, Datuk Ng Aun Hooi, to pay Gnanaraja.

Zarul Ahmad also agreed that from that loan, RM2mil was given to Gnanaraja for Najib while the balance of RM300,000 was used for his business.

However, when in court, Zarul Ahmad

said the money was the proceeds from the sale of a plot of land meant for the undersea tunnel project by his company CZCSB to another company, Zenith Urban Development Sdn Bhd.

Haijan: Do you agree that in your testimony in court, you have never mentioned that the RM2.3mil was borrowed from Datuk Ng?

Zarul Ahmad: Yes, I didn't.

Haijan: You didn't mention it, while the account statement of Vizione Construction Sdn Bhd (Ng's company) showed it deposited the money to your company.

Zarul Ahmad: I don't remember.

Zarul Ahmad was being questioned during an impeachment proceeding into his conflicting statements with the MACC in the Sessions Court and in a previous Shah Alam case.

Rayer also asked Zarul Ahmad if he had lied to the MACC about the money in his statement in 2018.

"Lying is a heavy word that you are accusing me of. I don't agree with you," he said.

Zarul Ahmad agreed with Rayer that he did not mention Lim's name in his statement with the MACC about the RM2mil sum.

Deputy public prosecutor Mahadi Abdul Jumaat then told the court that questions about Zarul Ahmad's statement to MACC had already been raised.

Judge Azura Alwi told Rayer to move on to another issue, saying there was "no

point" in quarrelling with Zarul Ahmad about his statement.

When questioned by another of Lim's counsel Tiara Katrina Fuad, he agreed that in a meeting with Ng, he did not mention Lim's name as to whom the borrowed sum of RM2.3mil was intended for.

Zarul Ahmad also agreed that he told Ng that the money was meant to be given to Gnanaraja.

Earlier, Azura issued a warning to Haijan for prolonging the impeachment proceeding with repeated questions.

"I see that you have been asking the same questions, but using different words," she said.

"We still have a few more parts to go. If we go on with this pace, I don't know when we will finish this," she added.

Azura noted that she needed to "control" her court as the proceeding was taking too long.

"I was okay from the beginning with all the facts but I lost my concentration and flow of facts later too.

"You should think about what you are doing," she said.

After Haijan apologised, Azura further reminded him: "Perhaps you want the witness to answer what you wanted but in the end, you have to be responsible for the risks."

The impeachment proceeding began after Azura granted the defence's request on Jan 9.

The hearing continues on Thursday.