

# NAJIB PUTS BLAME ON FORMER TIA BOSS

He also describes yacht meeting with Saudi prince, which he says occurred during family holiday

RAHMAT KHAIRULRIJAL  
KUALA LUMPUR  
news@nst.com.my

**D**ATUK Seri Najib Razak yesterday trained his guns on former Terengganu Investment Authority (TIA) chief executive Datuk Shahrol Azral Ibrahim Halmi, blaming him for issuing the company's RM5 billion Islamic Medium-Term Notes (IMTN) programme.

The former prime minister said on May 22, 2009, TIA's board of directors had passed a resolution instructing Shahrol to suspend IMTN's issuance as instructed by then Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin.

Initially established in 2009 as an entity owned by the Terengganu government, TIA was later established as 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB).

Najib said Shahrol and former

TIA board member Tan Sri Ismee Ismail had sought a meeting with him to discuss a resolution.

"During the meeting on May 22, 2009, Ismee began by briefing me on what transpired at the palace earlier that day. He explained that Sultan Mizan, who is also the Sultan of Terengganu, had ordered the suspension of the IMTN issuance and instructed both of them to sign the resolution formalising the suspension.

"Ismee also mentioned that all agreements related to the IMTN had been executed, a fact confirmed by Shahrol, including the Agreement for the Federal Guarantee.

"I asked if they had explained to His Majesty the consequences of suspending the IMTN, and both of them replied that they had not. They had carried out His Majesty's order and signed the resolution," Najib said while testifying in his 1MDB corruption trial at the High Court yesterday.

Najib also dismissed Shahrol's testimony as a prosecution witness, denying claims that he had said, "You go ahead, I will speak to His Majesty."

He said that neither Shahrol nor Ismee appeared certain about how to handle the situation, and he was also unsure at the time.

Najib also dismissed Shahrol's claims that fugitive businessman Low Taek Jho, or Jho Low, was present during the meeting held at his residence in Jalan Langgak Duta here.

Najib also denied ever setting foot in Low's residence in Jalan Kia Peng.

He said this was contrary to the testimony of several prosecution witnesses.

"However, several prosecution witnesses from the 1MDB management, like former 1MDB chief executives Datuk Shahrol Azral Ibrahim Halmi, Mohd Hazem Abdul Rahman, former 1MDB lawyer Jasmine Loo Ai Swan, and my former officer Datuk Amhari Efendi Nazaruddin visited his home repeatedly."

Najib's lead counsel, Tan Sri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah, then highlighted the facts presented by the prosecution witnesses regarding the talking points prepared by Low, which they claimed were aligned with



Najib's vision for the sovereign wealth fund.

Najib denied knowledge of the prosecution's facts and said he was not aware that Low was acting as an "orchestrator" on his behalf at 1MDB.

"I gave no such blessings. As I now understand from the evidence presented in this trial, it was a unified directive from Jho Low to his proxies within 1MDB.

"These talking points were crafted solely by Low's collaborators and systematically used to give unified directions regarding this matter," he said.

He also provided a detailed account of the infamous family vacation aboard a yacht in Southern France with Low and members of the Saudi royal family.

Najib described the trip as purely a family holiday before Prince Turki bin Abdullah Al Saud invited him to the yacht *RM Elegance* for afternoon tea.

"Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor and my children Nor Ashman Razak, Nooryana Najwa and Riza Aziz were on the trip.

"Apart from my family, my friend Tan Sri Bustari Yusuf and his children also joined us.

"You can immediately visualise from the membership of my group that it was meant to be a private holiday to begin with," he said.

Najib's lead counsel, Tan Sri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah, then asked his client to describe his meeting with Prince Turki.

Najib replied it was his first time meeting a Saudi royalty.

"I met Prince Turki on the second or third day of the vacation when the captain of *RM Elegance* informed me that he had extended an invitation for me and my family to join him for afternoon tea on his yacht, which was nearby.

"I was quite surprised by the invitation, as Prince Turki was the favourite son of King Abdullah, the reigning King of Saudi Arabia at the time. I graciously accepted the invitation.

"When we boarded the yacht, we were greeted by Prince Turki and a gentleman who introduced himself as Tarek Obaid.

"Our host invited us into the yacht's main living room, and upon entering, I noticed that Low was already there. He then greeted me and my family," he said.

Shafee then asked Najib if he was surprised by Low's presence, to which he responded in the affirmative.

"However, given what I understood about Low's connections and influence, particularly his close ties with Middle Eastern royalty, it was not entirely unexpected," he said.