

'I have never set foot in that bank'

Najib pleads ignorance to 1MDB charges on first day of defence trial

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

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Najib Razak said he was puzzled over a key ingredient in the charges he faces in the RM2.28bil 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) case.

He claimed he had never set foot in the bank in question.

According to the first charge relating to abuse of power, Najib is accused of committing the offence at the Jalan Raja Chulan branch between Feb 24, 2011, and Dec 19, 2014.

"No, I have never set foot in AmIslamic Bank, Jalan Raja Chulan, Kuala Lumpur, between that period, nor have I ever been there at any other material time in relation

to the entire 1MDB or SRC episodes," the former prime minister said yesterday.

"I was so puzzled that I had to inquire from my lawyers about this allegation while the charges were being read to me," he said when reading his 525-page witness statement.

Najib also said he believed the RM60.6mil that was transferred into his personal AmIslamic bank account was donations from the late King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, which he deemed as a "financial assistance".

He said there were remittances amounting to RM60,629,839.93 from Prince Faisal bin Turki bin Bandar Al-Saud and Prince Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and that he did inform the Malaysian Anti-

Corruption Commission (MACC) during the investigation into 1MDB that these were donations from the Saudi kingdom.

"Prior to those remittances, I was personally informed by the late Saudi monarch King Abdullah during a private audience back in 2010 where he conveyed through interpreters his intention to support me financially.

"I have, in fact, received remittances from Riyadh Bank in Saudi Arabia. I have also received letters confirming this Saudi Arabian donation from King Abdullah through his royal representatives, which were extended to AmBank and Bank Negara," Najib said.

This belief, he said, was further supported by former Saudi minister Adel Al-Jubair, who had con-



Under guard: Najib (centre) being escorted at the Kuala Lumpur Courts Complex. — Bernama

firmed that the donation was genuine.

Najib was taking the stand as the first defence witness in the 1MDB trial on the first day of the defence trial.

He is facing four counts of using his position to obtain RM2.28bil as gratification from 1MDB's funds and 21 counts of money laundering involving the same amount.

The abuse of power offences were allegedly committed at the AmIslamic Bank Bhd branch on Jalan Raja Chulan in Kuala Lumpur between Feb 24, 2011 and Dec 19, 2014. The money-laundering offences were allegedly committed at the same location between

March 22 and Aug 30, 2013.

The charges were framed under Section 23(1) of the MACC Act 2009 and punishable under Section 24(1) of the same Act.

Najib is facing imprisonment of up to 20 years and a fine five times the amount of gratification or RM10,000, whichever is higher, upon conviction.

The hearing is set to continue before Justice Collin Lawrence Sequerah today.

