

LUXURY YACHT VACATION CRUISE

'Najib flouted rules in meeting with Saudi prince'

KUALA LUMPUR: A witness yesterday testified that Datuk Seri Najib Razak turned his family vacation on a yacht with fugitive businessman Low Taek Jho into a government-to-government (G2G) meeting with a Saudi prince.

The meeting was purportedly aimed at discussing a joint venture agreement between 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) and PetroSaudi International Ltd (PSI).

Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) senior officer Nur Aida Arifin said the meeting, which was also attended by PSI director Tarek Obaid on a yacht known as *RM Elegance*, was

not arranged through diplomatic channels.

She said the meeting did not follow proper channels and had caused significant losses to the country.

"As a prime minister, he should have known that G2G discussions need to go through proper diplomatic channels, not informal discussions on a yacht.

"The meeting did not involve government officials, even though the government had to bear the burden due to the government guarantee for that loan," she said when testifying as the 49th prosecution witness in Najib's corruption trial for allegedly misappropriating millions of

funds belonging to 1MDB.

On May 9, 2022, Najib's special officer Datuk Wan Ahmad Shihab Wan Ismail, when testifying in the same trial, revealed how his then boss and family members enjoyed their cruise along the French coastline onboard the *RM Elegance* yacht.

He said sometime in August 2009, Low called him to say that Najib and his family would be holidaying in southern France on the invitation of a Kuwaiti prince and an individual known only as Sheikh Hamed.

Shihab said he later received confirmation on the planned trip from Najib and was instructed to make all necessary arrange-

ments.

He said Najib's wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor and their children Nor Ashman, Nooryana Najwa and Najib's son Riza Aziz were among those listed to travel as part of the delegation.

Others in the 20-odd delegation included Najib's friend Tan Sri Bustari Yusuf and one of his children, their maids and household staff. The trip on Aug 15, 2009, he said, was paid for in full by the Kuwaiti prince.

Nur Aida, who is the investigating officer of the case, also said Najib had directed former 1MDB chief executive officer Datuk Shahrol Azral Ibrahim Halmi not to assess the PSI assets.



"Najib said he wanted to safeguard the political and reputational standing of the bilateral relations between Malaysia and Saudi Arabia.

"Najib used Low and Shahrol Azral to pressure the 1MDB board members, through its former chairman Tan Sri Mohd Bakke Salleh, to follow their instructions and recommendations in various actions and decisions related to the joint venture with PSI."

Najib, 70, is facing four charges of using his position to obtain bribes totalling RM2.3 billion from 1MDB funds and 21 charges of money laundering.