

WAR OF WORDS OVER TESTIMONY

Judge intervenes
after Shafee objects
repeatedly to MACC
officer's testimony

RAHMAT KHAIRULRIJAL
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

A WAR of words between Datuk Seri Najib Razak's defence team and the prosecution continued

to intensify yesterday prompting the judge to defuse the situation. Najib's lead counsel Tan Sri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah argued that the prosecution's star witness Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) senior officer Nur Aida Arifin's testimony was hearsay as she had drawn various conclusions about the case.

But lead prosecutor Ahmad Akram Gharib countered that the witness who was the investigating officer was merely testifying on the findings of her probe.

Shafee, who was dissatisfied with Nur Aida's statement, objected whenever the 49th prosecution witness finished reading each paragraph of her 95-page statement.

Judge Datuk Collin Lawrence Sequerah said the proceedings could not continue at this pace. "Either we continue on this

path, or I adjourn the trial and both parties come up with a statement they can live with. We cannot go on like this," he said.

Sequerah then adjourned the proceedings.

The trial continued without a hitch after lunch, with Nur Aida continuing to testify on 1MDB's venture into the energy sector and independent power producers (IPPs).

The witness said in May 2010, 1MDB former chief executive officer Datuk Shahrol Azral Ibrahim Halmi sent a letter to Najib informing him of the company's proposal to venture into the energy sector and IPP.

She said fugitive businessman Low Taek Jho, or Jho Low, brought the idea of the proposed acquisition of Tanjong Energy Holdings Sdn Bhd to Najib and informed Shahrol that the latter gave "positive feedback" on it.

This prompted Shafee to object to the statement by stating that it was hearsay.

Akram countered that the statement was based on Shahrol's testimony in court.

The judge said part of the witness's role was to read Shahrol's testimony in court. The court recorded Shafee's objection.

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 involving the same amount.

The trial continues.



Former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's lead counsel Tan Sri Shafee Abdullah was dissatisfied with the testimony of the prosecution's key witness yesterday. PIC BY SAIFULLIZAN TAMADI