

**'NOT MASTERMIND'**

# NAJIB SORRY FOR 1MDB SCANDAL

Former PM maintains innocence as he claims he was deceived by Jho Low, his associates

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**D**ATUK Seri Najib Razak has issued an apology for all that transpired during the 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) financial scandal.

Despite his apology, the former prime minister asserted his innocence, claiming he was deceived by fugitive businessman Low Taek Jho and his associates.

Najib said this in a statement read out by his eldest son, Datuk Mohamad Nizar, at the Kuala Lumpur Court Complex yesterday. The High Court is expected to deliver its verdict at the conclusion of the prosecution's case next week.

"After much reflection over the course of 26 months in prison and following significant recent developments relating to 1MDB, I

have decided to make the following statement.

"First and foremost, it pains me every day to know that the 1MDB debacle happened on my watch as finance minister and prime minister. For that, I would like to apologise unreservedly to the Malaysian people.

"The recent court hearings and conviction of the PetroSaudi executives in the Switzerland courts as well as the recent article by *The Edge*, based on their analysis of the case as well as internal PetroSaudi emails in their possession again prove that I am not the mastermind and did not collaborate with Jho Low (fugitive businessman Low Taek Jho) in deceiving 1MDB of its funds."

Najib said the article had reached a conclusion that PetroSaudi and Low had collaborated to deceive him, and that he was not aware that Petrosaudi was siphoning off 1MDB funds.

He said the article had also concluded that he did not knowingly receive any money from the funds sent by 1MDB to PetroSaudi.

"As hard as it is for some people to fathom, I was advised and honestly believed at the time that the funds I received were political donations from Saudia Arabia. As established by court proceedings, there were indeed two confirmed

large donations in 2010 from the government of Saudia Arabia.

"Those were not the subject of any criminal nor civil proceedings. With the benefit of hindsight when various parties began to question what was happening at 1MDB, I should have acted differently."

Najib said while he had initiated investigations, he was inclined to believe explanations by the board and management.

He claimed that he became suspicious about what was going on at 1MDB, his immediate concerns were its "financial predicaments and the risk it posed to diplomatic and bilateral relations" at the highest levels.

"I have already been punished politically but as I am not the mastermind and neither did I collaborate with Jho Low as recent events have shown, I should not be victimised legally, too.

"I am still in deep shock knowing now the extent of the wretched and unconscionable shenanigans, and illegal things that happened in 1MDB.

"I deeply regret what has taken place at SRC and 1MDB. However, being held legally responsible for things that I did not initiate or knowingly enable is unfair to me and I hope and pray that the judicial process will, in the end,



A front-page story on former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's sentence, published by the NST on July 29, 2020.

prove my innocence."

The former Pekan member of parliament was charged in the Sessions Court on Sept 20, 2018, and the case was allowed to be transferred to the High Court on Oct 31, 2018. The trial began on Aug 28, 2019.

Among the key witnesses called to testify were former 1MDB chairman Tan Sri Mohd Bakke Salleh, former chief executive Datuk Shahrol Azral Ibrahim Halmi, former Bank Negara Malaysia governor Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz, and former 1MDB general counsel, Jasmine Loo Ai Swan.

Najib was charged under Section 23(1) of the Malaysian Anti-

Corruption Commission Act, which provides for imprisonment of up to 20 years and a fine of up to five times the amount or value of the bribe, or RM10,000, whichever is higher, if found guilty.

For the 21 charges of money laundering, Najib is accused of committing the offences between March 22, 2013, and Aug 30, 2013.

All these charges are under Section 4(l)(a) of the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing, and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act, which carries a maximum fine of RM5 million and imprisonment of up to five years, or both, upon conviction.