

NAJIB TO KNOW FATE TOMORROW

Ex-PM will learn whether he will get off scot-free or be required to answer all criminal charges

RAHMAT KHAIRULRIJAL
KUALA LUMPUR
rahmat@nst.com.my

AFTER six long years of legal battles and intense public scrutiny, Datuk Seri Najib Razak will face a monumental decision tomorrow.

The former prime minister will learn whether he will be let off scot-free or required to answer all criminal charges related to the 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) financial debacle.

Presiding judge Datuk Collin Lawrence Sequerah is expected to give his verdict at the end of the prosecution's case at 9am.

In legal proceedings, when a court makes a decision at the end of the prosecution's case, it means the judge will determine whether the evidence presented is sufficient to establish a prima facie case against the accused.

If the court determines that there is sufficient evidence, the accused will be required to enter his or her defence and present his case, which involves three options — provide sworn evidence in the witness box and undergo cross-examination, make an unsworn statement from the dock without facing cross-examination, or remain silent, in which case the court will be compelled to convict the accused.

However, if the evidence is deemed insufficient, the court



Former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak speaking to journalists outside the Federal Court in Putrajaya on Aug 23, 2022. The court upheld his conviction in the SRC International case.

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may acquit the accused without calling for a defence.

Sequerah, a Court of Appeal judge presiding as a High Court judge, set the date after both the prosecution and defence teams completed their submissions at the close of the prosecution's case on Oct 3.

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 officer 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.

Last week, Najib, in a statement read by his eldest son, issued an apology for all that transpired during the 1MDB financial scandal.

Despite his apology, the former prime minister asserted his innocence, claiming he was deceived by fugitive businessman Low Taek Jho, better known as Jho Low, and the latter's associates.