

Najib grilled over spending

Personal, political expenses questioned during 1MDB trial

KUALA LUMPUR: The trial judge in Datuk Seri Najib Razak's 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) case has questioned the defence team about the distinction between the former premier's personal expenses and those for political purposes.

High Court judge Justice Collin Lawrence Sequerah posed the question to Najib's lead counsel, Tan Sri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah, during his submission at the close of the prosecution's case yesterday.

Justice Sequerah: Any difference between spending for political and personal usage?

Muhammad Shafee: We have proved that 99% of the money in

his account was not used for his personal purpose. For instance, he didn't buy a private plane or treat everybody with champagne in a New York bar, or something like that.

"My Lord, I have to use this word; it is against the pathology of corruption, that a person took this money and spent it not for personal use, but for the benefit of the public," he said, adding that Najib had used RM300mil from 1MDB for the 2013 general election.

At this juncture, Justice Sequerah questioned the senior counsel if there were any case laws to back his argument.

In response, Muhammad

Shafee said that "it is an inference of facts" and that there is no case quite like Najib's 1MDB case, setting it apart from any precedent.

The judge then asked for the prosecution's comment on the matter and deputy public prosecutor Kamal Bahrin Omar replied that they are only concerned with the fact that the alleged funds - which entered Najib's accounts - came from illegal proceeds.

Fellow DPP Ahmad Akram Gharib added that it did not matter whether Najib used the purported funds for personal or political reasons.

"The law says that it is for his

advantage," he said.

Najib, 71, faces four charges of abusing his position to obtain RM2.3bil from 1MDB funds at the AmIslamic Bank Bhd branch in Jalan Raja Chulan, Bukit Ceylon, between Feb 24, 2011 and Dec 19, 2014.

He also faces 21 charges of money laundering involving the same amount at the same bank between March 22, 2013 and Aug 30, 2013.

Najib is charged under Section 23(1) of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2009 and Section 4(1)(a) of the Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorism Financing Act.

The hearing continues.