

Dr M asked for police briefing on 1MDB case, court hears

PUTRAJAYA: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad requested a high-level police briefing on the 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) financial scandal five days after taking office as prime minister for the second time in 2018.

Retired police officer R. Rajagopal, who was the investigator in the case, said he briefed Dr Mahathir at Yayasan Perdana on May 15 that year.

He was testifying as a defence witness in Datuk Seri Najib Razak's trial over the misappropriation of billions of ringgit in 1MDB funds.

Rajagopal was tasked with investigating the alleged criminal breach of trust involving 1MDB's board of directors and top management.

"On May 15, I was directed to give a briefing to Dr Mahathir and went to Yayasan Perdana with the then inspector-general of police, Tan Sri Mohamad Fuzi Harun, and the then Commercial Crime Investigation Department director, Datuk Seri Amar Singh Ishar Singh.

"I gave a PowerPoint presentation and said this is what we did in the country, and he (Dr Mahathir) just said to complete (gathering) evidence from foreign jurisdictions.

"During the briefing, I highlighted the United States Department of Justice complaint in 2016 and 2017, and showed proceeds from 1MDB and (that) it landed among others in Najib's bank account," said Rajagopal.

The witness agreed with the prosecution's suggestion that the direction of the 1MDB probe changed after the 14th general election, when the Barisan Nasional government collapsed and was replaced by Pakatan Harapan.

The prosecution, however, raised an objection when Najib's lead counsel, Tan Sri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah, bombarded the witness with extensive details about his meeting with Dr Mahathir. Lead prosecutor Ahmad Akram Gharib argued that the meeting was irrelevant to the case. Shafee said he wanted to prove that his client had never attempted to "meddle" in the police investigation into 1MDB.

Judge Datuk Collin Lawrence Sequerah allowed Shafee to continue his line of re-examination.

Shafee asked the witness whether anyone at the meeting suggested a specific person to be charged over the 1MDB affair, to which Rajagopal answered in the negative.