

Najib says he returned US\$620m to avoid misinterpretation

PUTRAJAYA: The prosecution yesterday questioned Datuk Seri Najib Razak on why he did not personally inform the Saudi royals when he decided to return the US\$620 million that he claimed was a political donation.

Deputy public prosecutor Kamal Baharin Omar suggested to the former prime minister that this was because he knew the money originated from 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB), a claim Najib denied.

The trial established that Najib had received millions from Saudi Arabia's late King Abdullah Abdulaziz Al-Saud through Saud Abdulaziz bin Majid Al-Saud, a former governor of the Madinah province, starting in 2011.

The money was remitted into

his personal AmBank account from various entities linked to fugitive businessman Low Taek Jho, including the shell company Tanore Finance Corporation.

The former Pekan member of parliament had decided to return the funds to an entity appointed by the Saudi government.

In yesterday's proceedings, Najib testified that he felt compelled to return the funds as he did not want a large sum of money in his bank account to avoid misinterpretation.

Kamal Baharin: Who did you instruct?

Najib: I wrote a letter to the bank.

Kamal Baharin: When you returned the funds, did you inform

Tanore Corp?

Najib: Not officially. But through banking documents.

Kamal Baharin: Did you send a letter to Saud to inform him?

Najib: No.

Kamal Baharin: You said that the money was a donation from King Abdullah. This money indirectly came from him. Did you inform King Abdullah?

Najib: They knew through their system. Personally, no.

Kamal Baharin: In the system, it's to Tanore. Saud is not in the system.

Najib: I assumed Tanore came from them.

Kamal Baharin: You did not inform because you knew the money you returned did not come from Saud?

Najib: No.

Kamal Baharin:

You did not send a notification letter to King Abdullah because you believed the money didn't come from him?

Najib: I disagree.

Najib, in his witness statement, had claimed that he used all the funds in accordance with the purposes he believed they were given for, namely political activities and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

He claimed that he would not have deposited the funds into his personal bank account if he had known that Blackstone and Tanore had no connection with the late King Abdullah.



The prosecution also raised the issue of discrepancy in the four Saudi letters to Najib from 2011 to 2014, which allegedly confirmed the

money was a political donation.

The prosecution asserted that the letters were actually forged by Kee Kok Thiam, as instructed by Low, to which Najib disagreed.

Najib faces 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 before judge Datuk Collin Lawrence Sequerah continues.