

Najib: I didn't influence 1MDB chairman on deal

PUTRAJAYA: Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday dismissed the prosecution's suggestion that he pressured the 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) chairman into sealing a joint venture with PetroSaudi International (PSI) through a telephone call in 2009.

The High Court heard that fugitive businessman Low Taek Jho, also known as Jho Low, had telephoned Najib.

He then passed the phone to Tan Sri Mohd Bakke Salleh, who was set to chair a board meeting on Sept 29 to discuss a proposed joint venture between 1MDB and PSI.

"I did not influence him. I only indicated to him from a strategic point of view. If you read the minutes of the meeting, he did not refer to the phone conversation.

"In other words, the board members were not influenced by my phone call.

"This is very important because Bakke is the chairman and other board members did not know of

the phone call.

"The phone call did not influence the board's decision," said Najib at the RM2.27 billion 1MDB abuse of power and money laundering trial.

The former prime minister said this when cross-examined by deputy public prosecutor Ahmad Akram Gharib.

Najib disagreed with Akram's suggestion that he had tried to influence Bakke on that day.

The prosecutor suggested that Najib had told Bakke he would have liked the board to firm up the decision on the joint venture, stating that it was an important government-to-government project and that he was looking forward to the signing ceremony.

Najib also disagreed when Akram put it to him that he was aware that 1MDB was going to decide at the meeting how to use part of RM4.3 billion, raised from Islamic medium-term notes bonds it had at its disposal.

Under cross-examination by

deputy public prosecutor Mohammad Mustafa P. Konyalam, Najib denied that the issuance of US\$3 billion worth of bonds by 1MDB with the International Petroleum Investment Company and Aabar Investments was a mechanism to get political funds for Umno.

Mustaffa: I put it to you that the US\$3 billion was used through cheques to Umno and Barisan Nasional (BN) entities ... using 1MDB as a personal interest for the Umno president and BN chairman as preparation for the 13th General Election.

Najib: Disagree.

Mustaffa: I put it to you that you had used 1MDB funds as political funds to maintain as Umno president, BN chairman and prime minister.

Najib: Disagree.

Najib, who was Umno president and BN chairman, faces four charges of using his position to obtain RM2.27 billion in bribes from 1MDB funds and 21 charges of money laundering involving the same amount.

The trial before judge Datuk Collin Lawrence Sequerah continues.

