

'I DID NOT USE SAUDI DONATION TO BUY YACHT OR BUNGALOW'

Najib says he spent money on what was good for country

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DATUK Seri Najib Razak told the High Court yesterday he spent the purported Saudi donation for the betterment of the country and not on himself.

The former prime minister said although the donor, the late Saudi ruler King Abdullah, had given him discretion on how the gift should be used, he chose to spend the money on what was good for the country.

"I did not use it to buy a yacht or a luxury bungalow, which I could have done. I was being transparent and you can see that from the cheques I issued.

"I did not think it would be right to have that money and spend it as I like. I did not think any leader of a country would do that.

"But a leader would strengthen leadership, do something good for the country and for the cause of Islam," Najib said when re-examined by his lawyer, Tan Sri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah.

Najib was testifying in his defence against charges of misappropriating billions of ringgit belonging to 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB).

Asked by Shafee if he was the only leader outside of Saudi Arabia to have received the donation, Najib said the Saudis were generous with their support of other leaders.

"I believe even the king of Spain received it (Saudi donations, Lebanon, Pakistan, Egypt... all these countries have received donations from Saudi Arabia."

Najib had claimed that he returned US\$620 million of the US\$680 million he received from the Saudi ruler.

On another matter, Najib said he had a "gargantuan task" as prime minister, which did not enable him to focus on matters related to 1MDB.

He said he had a lot on his plate



Datuk Seri Najib Razak leaving the court after trial proceedings in December last year. He told the court yesterday that he had a 'gargantuan task' as prime minister and, therefore, was unaware he was being misled by the 1MDB management, fugitive businessman Low Taek Jho and others. NSTP FILE PIC

during his tenure and, therefore, was not aware that he was being misled by the 1MDB management, fugitive businessman Low Taek Jho, better known as Jho Low, and other individuals.

Najib said apart from running the country, he was, among others, the chairman of Khazanah and Permodalan Nasional Bhd, on top of having to handle crises such as the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 and the Lahad Datu intrusion.

"In other words, if the 1MDB management and board did things correctly and in the interest of the country, the organisation could do well and you would not have encountered the same problems as we did in 1MDB.

"When you are so involved in so

many things, you have to depend on people managing the system. It is impossible for one person to do everything," he said.

Earlier, Najib told the court it was common practice for the attorney-general (A-G) to brief the prime minister on public interest cases, but he was mindful of not interfering in the prosecution's decisions during his tenure.

He said this to refute accusations that he had tried to interfere in the 1MDB investigations during a phone call with then deputy public prosecutor Tan Sri Dzulkifli Ahmad in 2016.

Dzulkifli was later appointed Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission chief commissioner.

Deputy public prosecutor Ahmad Akram Gharib had submitted that it was improper for Najib to listen to a briefing by Dzulkifli on the investigations against him.

The prosecution had used an audio recording released by ex-MACC chief commissioner Lath-

eefa Koya in 2020 as evidence in court.

Najib told presiding judge Datuk Collin Lawrence Sequerah that when he was the prime minister, he was often blamed whenever someone was charged.

"I get the blame when it was the A-G's decision and I do not interfere. For example, when Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik was charged, that was the decision of (then A-G) Tan Sri Abdul Gani Patail.

"He wanted to charge (Ling) and he was adamant about it. But I got the blame, and since then, Ling has not been on speaking terms with me."

Ling, who was transport minister from January 1986 to May 2003, was charged in 2010 with cheating the government in the Port Klang Free Zone scandal.

Ling was acquitted in 2013.

When asked by Shafee if he had directed Dzulkifli to manipulate the case in his favour, Najib said: "No, I did not. If I did, I could have been charged for it."

