

'Najib wasn't suspect at first'

Ex-PM was initially a witness in 1MDB probe, court told

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PUTRAJAYA: Former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak went from witness to suspect at the tail end of investigations into the 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) scandal, the High Court was told.

Former investigating officer Senior Asst Comm R. Rajagopal said Najib became a suspect when the investigation intensified.

"When I took over investigations, the focus was on whether there was an offence, and if there was, who committed it?

"Towards the end, the suspect was Najib as there was an in-flow of money into his bank account," Rajagopal said yesterday.

The retired police officer was being cross-examined by Deputy

Public Prosecutor Ahmad Akram Gharib at Najib's RM2.28bil 1MDB graft trial.

A tense exchange also took place as the witness was grilled by DPP Ahmad Akram on his investigation.

DPP: You have been in the service for 41 years but you have never done an investigation under the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Act.

Rajagopal: Yes, we never do (investigations under the MACC Act), but at the end of the investigation we could make a recommendation (for the accused to be charged under the MACC Act).

DPP: Are you familiar with Section 16 of the MACC Act?

Rajagopal: The details of it I may not know, but if you show me, I would know.

The DPP and the witness went back and forth with the provisions under the MACC Act to a point that the witness was heard raising his voice.

DPP: Do you know the elements that need to be proven under Section 23 (of the MACC Act)?

Rajagopal: No.

According to Rajagopal, his investigation was based on a police report lodged by former Batu Kawan Umno division deputy chief Datuk Seri Khairuddin Abu Hassan.

Khairuddin lodged the report on Dec 12, 2014.

Najib, 71, is on trial on 25 charges in total - four for abuse of power that allegedly brought him the financial benefit to the tune of RM2.28bil; and 21 for money laundering involving the same amount of money.

The four counts of power abuse were framed under Section 23(1) of the MACC 2009 which provides for imprisonment of up to 20 years and a fine of up to five times the amount or gratification, or RM10,000, whichever is higher, upon conviction.

For the 21 charges of money laundering, Najib is charged under Section 4(l)(a) of the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing, and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act (AMLATFA), which carries a maximum fine of RM5mil and imprisonment for up to five years, or both, upon conviction.

On Oct 30, last year, Najib was ordered by the High Court to enter his defence on all charges.

The hearing continues before Justice Collin Lawrence Sequerah on April 7.