

NAJIB HITS OUT AT OPPONENTS

Former PM denies any wrongdoing as his trial winds down

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AS Datuk Seri Najib Razak's RM2.3 billion 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) corruption trial winds down, the former prime minister has issued a statement to his defence team's submissions.

He went on the attack against all opponents at his trial, making claims that the prosecution is expected to address in its submissions today.

Denying any wrongdoing, Najib described himself as "probably the only alleged corrupt politician or money launderer in history" to have returned the funds he supposedly received and informed Bank Negara of it.

He said he did not own any offshore accounts, unlike former 1MDB general counsel Jasmine

Loo Ai Swan or his former special officer, Datuk Amhari Effendi Nazaruddin, who had opened bank accounts through offshore shell companies.

He said he had instead opened a local account in his own name and immediately informed then-Bank Negara governor Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz that its purpose was to receive donations from Saudi Arabia.

"This submission will also demonstrate how the donations were spent; specifically, they were allocated to political and social welfare purposes. The payments were all made through cheques, with every sen recorded and accounted for.

"No million-dollar painting or swanky property was purchased from the funds I received," he said before presiding judge Datuk Collin Lawrence Sequerah.

Najib said it was shocking that despite the media frenzy surrounding the US\$681 million deposited into his account, the sum had never been proven to be traceable to 1MDB.

He said he had even returned US\$620 million to the source account after it was left unused and had written to Zeti to seek the central bank's approval for the refund.



Datuk Seri Najib Razak arriving at the Putrajaya Courts Complex for his case submission yesterday, NSTP PIC BY MOHD FADLI HAMZAH

Najib faces four charges of misappropriating RM2.3 billion in 1MDB funds and 21 charges of money laundering.

He also claimed the prosecution had depended heavily on hearsay evidence from witnesses who were never produced in court.

He said statements allegedly made by fugitive businessman Low Taek Jho, former 1MDB chief financial officer Nik Faisal Ariff Kamil and former executive director Terence Geh Choh Heng were accepted without legal basis.

"I was informed that the prosecution had not even met the fundamental prerequisite for the

admission of the prejudicial hearsay evidence.

"They have demonstrated no attempt to locate any of the witnesses, either Low, Nik Faisal or Terence Geh.

"The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), as far as the record is concerned, has not mentioned any single attempt at locating them before inviting this court to rule that they cannot be found," he said.

He also claimed that the prosecution was allowed to ignore the strict rules of evidence whenever it involved him.

"My lawyers informed me that in numerous other decisions, in-

cluding those of the highest court, as well as those of Yang Arif, the prerequisites of proving the exception allowing inadmissible hearsay evidence into the trial must be strictly met by the prosecution.

"However, given the prosecution's lack of effort, the leniency afforded here is jarring. The exception has been applied almost automatically," he said.

Najib said he had never been given the opportunity to challenge their assertions in court.

The former Pekan member of parliament said he was not seeking special treatment from the court, but only equality before the law.

Najib said he stood "alone" in the dock while others who allegedly committed financial wrongdoing in the 1MDB case were treated as prosecution witnesses.

"As a former prime minister, I am not asking for immunity, far from it. I am only seeking equality — the right to be treated like any other individual who has come before the judicial system."

Quoting former lord president Tun Suffian Hashim, Najib reminded the court that when judges bend to please those in power, they risk losing public trust.

"Your Lordship's decision will echo beyond me. It will define the kind of justice this nation keeps," he said.

