

# I returned US\$620mil in unused funds, says Najib

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Datuk Seri Najib Razak spoke at length at the High Court here as his defence case regarding the RM2.28bil 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) resumed its final leg.

The former prime minister, who wrote the statement from the Kajang Prison where he is serving his sentence in another 1MDB-related case, pointed out that he returned US\$620mil of unutilised funds from a donation to the source with the approval of Bank Negara.

"It would be shocking to learn that, despite the media frenzy over the US\$681mil, the entire sum has not even been proved to be traceable to 1MDB. Equally shocking is that I actually returned US\$620mil to the source account because it had not been utilised.

"Before returning the unused donation, I wrote to the (then) governor of Bank Negara, Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz, seeking Bank Negara's approval for the return.

"I would probably be the only alleged 'corrupt politician/money-lauderer' who returned the so-called gratification that he worked so hard to obtain, and probably the first in recorded history to have announced his 'ill-gotten' money to the governor of Bank Negara, of all people," he said yesterday.

At the outset of the proceedings, presiding judge Justice Collin Lawrence Sequerah had wanted Najib's lead counsel Tan Sri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah to read out the statement on his client's behalf.

The lawyer, however, said there had been precedent in previous cases where the accused read the statements to the court

prior to submissions.

Najib was then allowed to read the statement he crafted after it received no objection from deputy public prosecutor Datuk Akram Ahmad Gharib.

In his statement, Najib pointed out that several individuals linked to 1MDB, including former chief executive officers Datuk Shahrol Azral Ibrahim Halmi and Mohd Hazem Abdul Rahman, his former aide Datuk Amhari Effendi Nazaruddin and 1MDB general counsel Jasmine Loo Ai Swan, had carried out questionable transactions involving hundreds of millions of US dollars without facing legal consequences.

"The successful bidder for the Picasso painting and recipient of the RM100mil was 1MDB counsel Jasmine Loo.

"The individual who defied the King and transferred the US\$700mil and a further

US\$330mil to fugitive businessman Low Taek Jho or Jho Low was 1MDB's CEO Shahrol Azral, and 1MDB's subsequent CEO Mohd Hazem was the one who paid US\$175mil to a bogus company," Najib contended.

He said these individuals were treated as credible witnesses despite their alleged misconduct, yet he was charged.

They were chosen not for what they had to say, but for what they were willing to say, he added.

"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.

"Your decision will echo beyond me; it will define the kind of justice this nation keeps," he said in his closing remarks.

The court was also informed that the defence had compiled

seven volumes of written arguments for the case, which will be submitted over nine days.

Najib is facing four counts of using his position to obtain RM2.28bil gratification from 1MDB's funds and 21 counts of money laundering involving the same amount.

The abuse of power offences were allegedly committed at an AmIslamic Bank Bhd branch, Jalan Raja Chulan, Bukit Ceylon, between Feb 24, 2011, and Dec 19, 2014.

The money laundering offences were allegedly committed at the same location between March 22 and Aug 30, 2013.

Najib has been serving a prison sentence since Aug 23, 2022, after being convicted in a separate criminal trial over the misappropriation of RM42mil from SRC International Sdn Bhd.

The submissions resume today.