

Najib's 1MDB trial to proceed on May 13

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KUALA LUMPUR, May 4 -- The high-profile trial of former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, who is facing corruption and money laundering charges involving RM2.3 billion of 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) funds, will resume on May 13 in full compliance with the open court proceedings guidelines following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Deputy public prosecutor Ahmad Akram Gharib said the trial before High Court Judge Collin Lawrence Sequerah will start at 9am as scheduled with all parties compelled to adhere to the guidelines set by the court.

“We have been ordered to sit at our specifically allocated seats in the open court and to follow the social distancing markers,” he told Bernama via WhatsApp.

In a statement issued by the corporate communications unit of the Federal Court Chief Registrar's Office yesterday, Chief Justice Tan Sri Tengku Maimun Tuan Mat was quoted as saying that cases set for an open court hearing will begin in stages from May 13.

This follows the special announcement by Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin on May 1 and the letter from Public Service Department (PSD) director-general Datuk Mohd Khairul Adib Abd Rahman dated May 2, relating to government offices' operations in compliance with the Conditional Movement Control Order.

According to the statement, the court will also ensure that guidelines issued by the National Security Council (MKN), the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the PSD are followed at all times and all parties dealing with the court are urged to comply with the directives and guidelines issued by the court, MKN and MOH.

The court had previously set March 2-13, 19-20, 23-27 and 30-31; April 1-30; and May 4-8, 11-22 inclusive of Fridays for the 1MDB trial.

Other dates fixed were the entire month of June, July, August, September and October, including Fridays.

When the hearing resumes, defence lead counsel Tan Sri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah is expected to continue with cross-examination of the ninth prosecution witness, former 1MDB chief executive officer Datuk Shahrol Azral Ibrahim Halmi, who has been on the stand since Sept 23 last year.

Najib, 67, faces four charges of abusing his position to obtain gratification totalling RM2.3 billion in 1MDB funds and 21 counts of money laundering involving the same money.

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