

CHARGES OF SOLICITING AND RECEIVING KICKBACKS

Rosmah to know fate on Feb 18

KUALA LUMPUR: The High Court will decide on Feb 18 whether Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor should be called to enter her defence or allowed to walk free over charges of soliciting and receiving millions of ringgit in kickbacks.

The date was set by High Court judge Mohamed Zaini Mazlan after hearing submissions by senior deputy public prosecutor Datuk Seri Gopal Sri Ram and the lawyers representing Rosmah, Datuk Akberdin Abdul Kader and Datuk Jagjit Singh, at the end of the prosecution's case.

The prosecution had, on Dec 11 last year, wrapped up its case against the former prime minister's wife with 23 of its witnesses testifying in the trial, which started on Feb 5 last year.

Rosmah, 70, is facing one count of soliciting RM187.5 million and two counts of receiving bribes of RM6.5 million from Jepak Holdings Sdn Bhd former managing director Saidi Abang Samsudin, through her former special officer, Datuk Rizal Mansor, between January 2016 and September 2017.

She purportedly received the money in exchange for helping the company obtain a RM1.25 billion project to provide solar hybrid energy to 369 rural schools in Sarawak.

Earlier, Sri Ram submitted that the defence had addressed the wrong target in its submissions by denying that Rosmah had solicited any money from Saidi. This, he said, was not the prosecution's case.

He said the charge against the accused

was not that she had personally solicited the bribe in question and the prosecution's case was that she had done it through Rizal, the 21st witness in the trial.

The senior DPP said there was also evidence from Rizal that the accused had instructed him to solicit the bribe.

He said the solicitation was made through Rizal as the accused wanted to distinct herself from the act of soliciting and receiving bribes.

"She had, in her statement, denied knowing Saidi nor his business partner Rayyan Radzwill Abdullah because she wanted to stay away from this. This is a sign of guilt.

"She was clever enough to use Rizal as an agent to make the demand. If the court accepts the evidence of Rizal, prosecution witness (PW) 16 (Rayyan) and PW17 (Saidi), then the charge is established."

Sri Ram also said the main target of the defence was that Rizal had solicited the money for himself and when the money was delivered, he appropriated it for his own use without Rosmah's knowledge.

"It is highly improbable that PW21 (Rizal) would have acted off his own bat without the accused's knowledge. He would face dire consequences had he done so. Accordingly, the defence suggestion that PW21 was the villain of the piece cannot hold water."

Rosmah faces a maximum of 20 years' jail and a fine of not less than five times the amount of the gratification if convicted.

