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Syed Saddiq claims trial

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Muar MP facing two graft charges involving RM1.12mil

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KUALA LUMPUR: Former youth and sports minister Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman has claimed trial in the Sessions Court here to two counts of corruption involving RM1.12mil which belonged to his former political party, Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia.

The 28-year-old Muar MP pleaded not guilty after the charges were read out before Sessions Court judge Azura Alwi yesterday.

Wearing a black suit, the Muar MP said: "Minta dibicara (I claim trial)."

According to the first charge, Syed Saddiq, as the then youth leader of the party, was entrusted with the funds belonging to the party's youth wing Armada Malaysia, and he allegedly committed criminal breach of trust (CBT) where he was said to have made a withdrawal of RM1mil through a cheque without the approval of Bersatu's top leadership.

The offence was allegedly committed at CIMB Bank, Menara CIMB KL Sentral, Jalan Stesen Sentral 2 on March 6, 2020.

Syed Saddiq was charged under Section 405 of the Penal Code and punishable under Section 406 of the same Code, where he faces up to 10 years' imprisonment and whipping and liable to a fine.

For the second charge, Syed Saddiq was accused of misappropriating RM120,000 of contribution money that belonged to Bersatu, which was meant for the 14th General Election.

He allegedly committed the offence at Maybank in Taman Pandan Jaya, between April 8 and April 21, 2018.

The charge under Section 403 of the Penal Code carries imprisonment between six months and five years and whipping and can be liable to a fine, upon conviction.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Datuk Faridz Gohim Abdullah from the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) proposed a RM500,000 bail for the first charge and a RM30,000 bail for the second charge.

He said the accused was a man of high standing in society and the



Day in court: Syed Saddiq leaving the Jalan Duta Court Complex after posting bail. — GLENN GUAN/The Star

court must consider his position as a factor.

"The bail amount should reflect his tall standing as this case is receiving a wide media coverage.

"It must reflect the serious offence. The amount proposed is not punitive or manifestly excessive if you consider these factors," Faridz said.

The prosecutor also asked the court to make an order for Syed Saddiq not to comment on his case in public as it would tantamount to sub judice.

Lawyer Gobind Singh Deo objected to the bail amount and suggested RM20,000 instead.

"It is very excessive when the objective of bail is only to ensure the accused's presence in court," he said.

Gobind pointed out a document that showed the prosecution had obtained consent to prosecute seven months ago.

"It was signed on Jan 4. We are now in July. If this is indeed a serious case, why are they only taking action now when we are three days away from Parliament sitting?" he said.

Gobind said his client was an active MP in his constituency and

would not abscond.

On the gag order, Gobind said there was no basis for the prosecution to request such an order and that the right to freedom of speech was enshrined in the Federal Constitution.

Co-counsel Datuk S. Ambiga also stood up to object to the gag order.

She refuted the "danger of sub judice" that was raised by the prosecution and said that sub judice was more relevant in a jury trial.

"When they say sub judice, what they are really saying is that the court would be influenced by what the accused would say. That is an insult to the court.

"We have a robust democracy, the court has never been influenced," she said.

Ambiga said a gag order would set a bad precedent and urged the court not to encourage the practice.

On the consent to prosecute, DPP Faridz replied that a consent had no expiry date and it was the prerogative of the prosecutor when to initiate a case in court.

He also informed the court that Syed Saddiq would be facing a money-laundering charge at the Johor Baru Sessions Court soon and the prosecution would apply for the

case to be transferred to Kuala Lumpur.

Azura then fixed bail at RM300,000 for the first charge on CBT and RM30,000 for the second charge.

She also ordered for the accused to surrender his passport to the court and report to the MACC office monthly. The judge, however, did not make any gag order.

Gobind said his client would need some time to raise funds for the bail and the court allowed for RM50,000 (from the RM300,000) and RM30,000 to be paid by the end of day while the balance must be settled by next Tuesday.

The cases have been fixed for mention on Sept 10.

Syed Saddiq, who was accompanied by his parents Syed Abdul Rahman Syed Abdullah Al-Sagoff and Sharifah Mahani Syed Abdul Aziz, was seen jotting down notes in a book throughout the proceedings in court.

He left the court complex around 3.20pm after posting bail.

Watch the video
TheStarTV.com





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