

31 DEC 1996

PM-Muhammad

MUHAMMAD DID NOT ADMIT MONEY WAS HIS, SAYS PM'S OFFICE

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 31 (Bernama) -- Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Muhamad Taib did not admit to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that the undeclared money that he carried in Brisbane recently belonged to him as reported by the press today.

This was stated by the Prime Minister's Office.

"The Prime Minister categorically denies that Tan Sri Muhammad admitted that the money was his," said a one-page statement issued by his office today.

According to the statement, what Dr Mahathir meant was that Muhammad had admitted to the Australians that the money was his as he was carrying it.

"But he did not admit to the Prime Minister that the money belonged to him. He explained that the money he was carrying belonged to his brothers.

"This the Prime Minister did not say because he wanted Tan Sri Muhammad to explain this," the statement added.

Reporters had approached Dr Mahathir on the issue after he witnessed the roll out of the one millionth Proton car in Shah Alam yesterday.

Muhammad met Dr Mahathir on Saturday and the Sultan of Selangor the following day to explain himself.

Muhammad told a news conference yesterday that the money was entrusted by his brothers to purchase property in Brisbane's Gold Coast.

He was stopped on Dec 22 at the Brisbane airport for failing to declare S\$1 million and RM700,000 in his luggage and is due to appear in the Brisbane magistrate's court on March 21.

Muhammad, who was departing Brisbane for New Zealand, said he brought the money back because two of his brothers were not present to conclude the sales and purchase agreement for the property that was meant for their children to pursue their further education in Australia.

Under Australian law, people leaving the country must declare and justify any amount worth more than A\$5,000 (RM10,000) in whatever currency.

-- BERNAMA

TCL RM