

04 JAN 1997

Muhammad-Money

MY YOUNGER BROTHER EXPLAINED EVERYTHING TO PM, SAYS MUHAMMAD

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 4 (Bernama) -- Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Muhd Taib said today one of his younger brothers has given a written explanation to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad regarding the RM2.5 million cash incident in Australia.

Muhammad, who revealed on Monday that the money belonged to his three brothers and was meant for a property purchase deal in Brisbane's Gold Coast, said he handed over his brother's letter together with one of his own when he met Dr Mahathir last Saturday.

The letters explained "everything", he told reporters after opening a seminar on Islamic scientific and technological civilisation at Universiti Malaya here.

He was asked why his brothers had not come out with any public statement in support of his explanation on the money.

Muhammad was arrested in Brisbane on Dec 22 for not declaring the cash before boarding a flight to New Zealand and charged in a local court the following day.

He did not make any plea and is due to appear in the court again on March 21.

According to Muhammad, he was carrying one million Singapore dollars and RM700,000 in Malaysian currency which he said had been entrusted to him by an older and two younger brothers for a property purchase transaction in Brisbane's Gold Coast.

Under Australian law, people leaving the country must declare and justify any amount of cash over A\$5,000, in whatever currency.

Asked whether the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) had interviewed him regarding the money, he said: "I follow orders, I am loyal and obedient".

Questioned further whether he would contact the ACA on his own accord, he gave the same reply.

Muhammad asked the media not to include his case with other unconnected cases in the same news report, such as the current ACA investigation of a Selangor government official caught with RM1.5 million in his car.

The ACA probe stemmed from alleged irregularities in the de-gazetting of a forest reserve for logging and development, which also involved a businessman.

Referring to a newspaper's front page report on the investigation of the two persons who formerly worked in the Menteri Besar's office, Muhammad said: "A story like this on a normal day will appear on page 18 but because of the current news on me, it goes on the front page, although there is no connection (with my case)."

He said the Selangor government, through the Exco, approved projects to many people and the projects included forested or former forest land because of the shortage of land in the state, and it was done by the normal process.

Many former government officials who went into business and had become millionaires included officials who had worked with ministers or menteris besar, and this was normal, he said.

Meanwhile, Umno secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik said today Muhammad's case had not been included in the agenda for the party's Supreme Council meeting next week but members were free to bring it up if they wished.

The case was also not discussed by the party's management and

disciplinary committees, he told reporters after the award of star rating to hotels here. -- BERNAMA
AFY SJA CTL