

18 DEC 1998  
Court-Muhammad  
MUHAMMAD GIVES AWAY LAND IN BUKIT LANCONG TO DRIVER

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 18 (Bernama) -- Former Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib told the High Court here today that a piece of land in Bukit Lancong has been given away to his driver who is medically unfit.

He said the 0.6 ha land, which he was alleged to have failed to declare to the Anti Corruption Agency (ACA), was registered in his wife's name, Puan Sri Asbi Rohani Asnan.

He said the land was given away to Rohmat Kasmawi, 46, in March 1997 for his 11 years of service on the suggestion of his wife since Rohmat could no longer work as a driver after suffering a heart attack.

Asked by his counsel, Muhammad Shafee Abdullah, if he had been told about the land when making a declaration to the ACA, Muhammad said: "When discussing the assets that need to be declared, Puan Sri did not remind me about the land".

Asked by Shafee if he still considered the land to be owned by Asbi when the ACA sent a notice on April 17, 1997 for the declaration of assets, Muhammad said: "Once it is uttered to give it away as a gift, to us as Muslims, the land has become the property of Rohmat".

Muhammad, 53, making his defence in the second day of his trial, is alleged to have failed to declare all assets belonging to him and his family under the Prevention of Corruption Act 1961.

He faces a charge of failing to declare each and every fixed and movable assets belonging to him, his wife and children as required by the Public Prosecutor through a notice dated April 10, 1997 under Section 25(1) (a) of the Prevention of Corruption Act (Act 57).

Muhammad, who was Mentri Besar from 1986 to April 1997, was alleged to have committed the offence at the headquarters of the ACA in Persiaran Duta here on May 26, 1997.

He is charged under Section 25(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act (Act 57) which upon conviction carries a maximum jail sentence of one year or a fine of RM2,000 or both.

Under cross examination by Senior Deputy Public Prosecutor Datuk Abdul Rahim Uda on the sale of two pieces of land in Batang Kali to lawyer Kamarudin Ahmad, Muhammad said on receiving a 10 percent downpayment from Kamarudin on March 11, 1997, he had signed a letter giving up his rights to the lands and handed over the land titles to Kamarudin.

Asked why he did so when only 10 percent of the total price of RM464,000 had been paid by Kamarudin, Muhammad said: "Kamarudin is a family friend and I was confident he would not run away...I was the Menteri Besar then and in my view, he needed me more".

When told by Abdul Rahim that he did not declare the assets concerned on purpose, Muhammad said: "There's no big deal...making a declaration is not a big issue nor could it change the overall impact of the declaration of my assets".

"But, as the land in Bukit Lancong and the two pieces of land in Batang Kali had been given away and sold, they were no longer owned by me," he said.

Asked about the purchase of two pieces of land in Batang Kali for RM369,800 cash, Muhammad said the purchases were paid for by his brother, Datuk Raduan, via the issuance of two cheques.

On whether he had business dealings with his brother in a company

called Draland Sdn Bhd, Muhammad said he had transferred his 51 percent shareholding in the company to his brother when he was appointed Menteri Besar.

He said his 51 percent shareholding in the property development company, incorporated in 1984 in Melaka, was estimated at RM32 million based on the valuation of its assets alone.

He added he had declared the asset to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on March 1, 1991, on Dr Mahathir's advice for all Menteriis Besar to declare their assets.

The court also heard evidence from Asbi who said she had handed over the land title and signed form 14A for the transfer of the land to her driver, Rohmat.

--BERNAMA

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