

Najib, Dr M to be defence witnesses
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, two former prime ministers and eight ministers and former ministers will be interviewed by Dr Ling Liong Sik's defence lawyers in connection with the former transport minister's Port Klang Free Trade Zone trial.

The two former prime ministers are Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Lawyer Wong Kian Kheong (left), in informing the Kuala Lumpur High Court of the defence witness list, said he wanted these 12 persons for interview with a view to having them called as witnesses in the trial, should the defence be called.

The prosecution closed its case with its last witness, investigating officer Supt R Rajagopal testifying.

Wong said all of them were in the prosecution witness list except for Najib, "but we need him (Najib) as he chaired a cabinet meeting in 2007".

The others, he said, were current and former ministers who were in the cabinet from 2002 to 2004.

"They are Women, Family and Community Development Minister Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, Information, Communications and Culture Minister Rais Yatim and Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Bernard Dompok."

The others are former Energy and Telecommunications Minister Leo Moggie, former Education Minister Musa Mohamad, former Tourism Minister Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir, former Energy, Water and Communications Minister Lim Keng Yaik and former Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin.

The only non-minister in the line-up is the then special economic adviser to the then PM, Ali Abul Hassan.

Ling, 68, is charged with cheating the government by not disclosing to the cabinet an additional interest rate of 7.5 percent per annum on the purchase price of the land for the PKFZ project.

The price had been fixed at RM1,088,456,000 by the Valuation and Property Services Department, based on RM25 per sq ft, inclusive of the coupon/interest rate.

Ling faces two alternative charges, of allegedly cheating and intentionally omitting from telling the cabinet that the 7.5 percent per annum was an additional interest rate on the land price.

The offences were allegedly committed at the fourth floor of the Prime Minister's Office in the Perdana Putra building in Putrajaya, between Sept 25 and Nov 6, 2002.