

Ling: I would not dare cheat Dr M
MalaysiaKini.com
July 17, 2012
By Hafiz Yatim

Former Transport Minister Dr Ling Liong Sik today told the Kuala Lumpur High Court, after examination-in-chief by his lawyer, that he was wrongly charged with cheating the Cabinet over the Port Klang Free Zone scandal.

Ling, a medical doctor by profession, also invited trial judge Justice Ahmadi Asnawi to ask questions.

"I was wrongly charged with this... I invite the judge to ask questions," Ling said.

Justice Ahmadi replied: "The DPP will ask the questions," to laughter in the gallery.

When the Attorney General Chambers head of prosecution, Tun Abdul Majid Tun Hamzah, applied for cross-examination to be done tomorrow adding that it would take one and a half days, Justice Ahmadi responded: "See that the prosecution has a lot of questions to ask," while pointing at Ling.

Ling denied any intention of wanting to cheat the cabinet, the the then prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad, and the government to questions from his lawyer Wong Kian Kheong throughout the morning proceedings.

Wong: In documents P63 (Ling's letter dated April 3, 2002 to the PM) and P24 (his other letter dated June 29, 2002 to the PM), did you intend to deceive or conceal anything?

Ling: No, I dare not cheat the PM.

Wong : Did you ask the PM who was also the finance minister, to ignore the valuation and property management department's (JPPH) recommendations in respect to the department's letter to the Transport Ministry (regarding the valuation of the Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd) land.

Ling: Absolutely not.

Wong: In P24, the total sum of the price of the land, interests and costs and its purchase price was not disclosed.

Ling: That is something which should be explained by the Finance Ministry, not Transport Ministry.

Wong : Did you intend to mislead the PM?

Ling: No.

Wong : Would you have corrected P24 had you known about it before sending it to PM?

Ling: Yes, I would have corrected it.

No gratification

The two documents P24 and P63 were prepared by his senior officers namely secretary-general Zaharah Shaari, deputy secretary-general Abdul Rahman Mohd Noor and principal assistant secretary (Maritime) P Chandrasekaran.

Ling also denied that he or his family received any gratification with regards to the deal.

"Nope, even to think about it is wrong," he said.

The former transport minister and former MCA president said that neither the PM (Dr Mahathir) or his fellow Cabinet ministers had complained about the deal to purchase the land and develop it into PKFZ.

He also acknowledged issuing a letter of support to Malaysian International Merchant Bankers Bhd, (MIMB) and PTB Unit Trust (PTB) for bonds to be issued for repayment to finance the purchase.

"It is a letter of support not a guarantee," said the former minister.

Wong: Did you cheat the cabinet as charged?

Ling: No.

Wong: Were you asked to conceal the details of the deal?

Ling: No.

Wong: Was there any minister who complained about it?

Ling: No.

He added that in the preparation of the letter of support dated May 28, 2003, which he issued, no complaints were made.

Ling said he did not know if MIMB or PTB had sued the government for this project. The accused also said the PM did not complain over his decision to issue the letter of support.

Asked by Wong whether his actions could be deemed as favouring KDSB, Ling replied no.

Always on the move

Ling said as transport minister, Labis MP and MCA president, he had a busy schedule as he also ran the University Tunku Abdul Rahman and the six Tunku Abdul Rahman colleges. He also received many letters.

He said the job left him fully occupied and he was always on the move.

"I try to read all the letters. As for memorandums and other attachments I generally do not read them and would ask my officials to handle it," he said.

He also testified that he gave evidence to the Parliamentary Accounts Committee and to his knowledge, his evidence was accepted.

The former transport minister said he did not know the mechanics involved in the valuation of land and depended on JPPH which is under the Finance Ministry.

Whether it was done by special value, Ling said he could not tell as he did not understand the mechanics for valuation as all this was done by JPPH.

He was also asked by Wong (left) whether he obtained clarification from JPPH's deputy director-general U Mani regarding its calculation on the valuation.

The former minister replied that he would depend on his ministry officials first as JPPH is under the Finance Ministry.

Throughout Ling's defence, he maintained that the documents which he had sent to the Cabinet and the PM were prepared by his staff, and he had depended on their expertise.

On Friday, Ling testified that decisions by the cabinet were a collective responsibility and that former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad had stated that if any of the ministers did not approve of a decision, they could resign.

Hearing continues tomorrow with cross-examinations.