

Ling incapable of cheating cabinet, says Dr M
MalaysiaKini.com
9 Oktober, 2012
Oleh Hafiz Yatim

Former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad has testified that ex-transport minister Dr Ling Liong Sik, his colleague of 17 years and who he has known for 30 years, is not capable of cheating the cabinet.

Responding to Ling's lawyer Wong Kian Kheong in the Kuala Lumpur High Court today, he also said he knows Ling to be an honest person.

Mahathir, 87, is the fourth defence witness testifying in Ling's defence, against several counts of cheating the cabinet in relation to the cost of acquiring 1,000 acres (400 ha) of land for the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) project.

There was calm in the room as Mahathir replied Wong's questions until lead prosecutor and deputy solicitor-general II Tun Abdul Majid Tun Hamzah objected vehemently at one point.

Tun Majid, who was seated next to the witness box, got up and pointed at Mahathir, asking how he knows Ling is incapable of deceit.

"It is only the accused who would know," said Tun Majid, to boos from Ling's supporters in the public gallery.

Continuing, Mahathir said the letter and annexe provided by Ling and dated Oct 29, 2002, were passed to his special adviser Ali Abul Hassan Sulaiman, who studied the notes and said the project is economically viable and feasible.

He said Ling's notes were presented to the cabinet and no one had objected to the project.

These notes have become the basis of the prosecution's case, as the contents are said to contain misleading information on the price of the land.

The cabinet decided on Oct 2, 2002 to acquire the land. The decision was deferred a week later pending a study by the attorney-general (AG), and a report was presented citing reservations to the acquisition because of encumbrances.

However, on Nov 6, 2002, the land purchase was agreed on the basis of 'willing buyer, willing seller'.

'No complaints received'

Mahathir replied to a series of questions under examination-in-chief.

Wong: Did any of the Finance Ministry officers complain to you that the Ling's notes dated

Oct 29, 2002, were misconceived or was deceived?

Mahathir: No one complained.

Wong: After having gone through Ling's notes, were you deceived by my client in 2002?

Mahathir: No.

Wong: Up to today, have you lodged a police report that Ling's notes were used to cheat you as the PM and Finance Minister at that time?

Mahathir: No.

Wong: Did any of the ministers complain to you that the notes were used to mislead or misguide them?

Mahathir: No one complained.

Wong: The minutes of the cabinet meeting state that you chaired on Nov 6, 2002. There was an explanation that the purchase of land was on the basis of 'willing buyer, willing seller' and that the agreed price was RM25 per square feet. There was a note from the AG expressing concern that the land had encumbrances. Did the cabinet then decide to purchase the land?

Mahathir: Yes.

Wong: Can you confirm that Ali Abul Hassan said the project is viable, and based on 'willing buyer, willing seller'?

Mahathir: Yes, I believe he did submit a written report of the project's economic feasibility

Wong: Did Ali complain to you that my client had cheated, deceived with regard to the land price as stated in the notes?

Mahathir: I don't remember any complaint by Ali Abul Hassan.

Wong: In the minutes dated Nov 6, 2002, the cabinet agreed to the Port Klang Authority purchasing the land on a 'willing buyer, willing seller' basis at RM25 psf to be paid over 15 years? Did the RM25 include the total interest for 15 years?

Mahathir: No, it was the cash price.

Wong: When you chaired the meeting, did anyone complain that the cost was too high?

Mahathir: No one complained.

Mahathir also told the court that the Nov 6 decision was made collectively and unanimously and that after that date none of the cabinet ministers had approached him to say the purchase of land was wrong or that they had felt cheated.

The hearing will resume this afternoon with cross-examination of accountant Mok Chew Yin, who has been hired by Ling to show the land-cost calculations.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd

Source: <http://www.malysiakini.com/news/211151>