

'Mahathir not implicated in RM74m payout'

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KUALA LUMPUR: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was not implicated in a RM76.4 million payout to the Japanese-based NKK Corporation, the sessions court was told yesterday.

"Based on my investigations, Tun Dr Mahathir was not involved in the issue of the RM76.4 million payout," Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA)

investigating officer Han Chee Rull told sessions judge Akhtar Tahir during re-examination by Deputy Public Prosecutor Nordin Hassan.

Nordin had asked Han if Mahathir was directly or indirectly involved in the payment of the RM76.4 million to NKK Corporation.

However, defence lawyer Datuk Muhammad Shafee Abdullah objected, saying Han had on Tuesday told the court he was not aware of the extent of Mahathir's involvement in the matter.

Akhtar, however, allowed Nordin's question as he said it revolved around Han's investigations.

Earlier, Han told the court he had found it unnecessary to record further statements from former Perwaja Steel managing director Tan Sri Eric Chia despite obtaining new evidence on the case.

He said no other statements were taken from Chia subsequent to the Nov 9, 1996 cautioned statement recorded from him.

Nordin had referred Han to Muhammad Shafee's claim that Chia was not given an opportunity to give an explanation on the

additional evidence obtained by Han.

Asked what the new evidence was, Han said it was on the technical assistance agreement (TAA) and the flow of the RM76.4 million.

Asked whether Chia was asked to explain the issue of RM76.4 million, Han replied in the affirmative.

Asked whether the magistrates in Geneva and Zurich had allowed the defence to be present during the proceedings there, Han said the chance was given.

Muhammad Shafee objected, saying Han had previously stated he did not know what transpired in the court room because he did not sit through the hearing.

Muhammad Shafee had also contended previously that the defence team was notified about the hearing in Geneva and Zurich only at the last minute and had faced difficulties in seeking local lawyers to represent Chia at the hearing.

Asked why he had required about two weeks to study the documents related to the probe in Switzerland, Han said various types of documents had to be scrutinised.

He said these were documents related to the identity of the account holders, and deposit and withdrawal transactions.

He said the time was also to enable him to prepare a master flow chart and reports on the case.

Nordin then told Akhtar the prosecution had finished questioning Han and called two translators and a National Registration Department staff

to the witness stand.

When Akhtar asked whether the prosecution intended to call several witnesses from Hongkong, Nordin said it had yet to decide on the matter.

The hearing continues tomorrow.

TAN SRI ERIC CHIA CBT TRIAL

Judge: Kuala Lumpur sessions court Judge Akhtar Tahir

Prosecution: Attorney General Tan Sri Abdul Gani Patail and team.

Defence Counsel: Datuk Muhammad Shafee Abdullah and team.



Tan Sri Eric Chia Eng Hock,
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Main charge: While as managing director of Perwaja, he dishonestly authorised payment of RM76.4 million to Frilsham Enterprise Incorporated for technical assistance from NKK Corporation, when no such payment was due to the latter, at the Perwaja Rolling Mill and Development office in Menara UBN, Jalan P Ramlee, Kuala Lumpur on Feb 18, 1994.

Alternative charge: Criminal breach of trust of RM76.4 million, by dishonestly disposing the money by entering into an agreement with NKK Corporation at the same place between Nov 4, 1993 and Feb 22, 1994.

Penalty: Jail term of between two and 20 years, and a fine under Section 409 of the Penal Code.