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PRIME NEWS

Dr M: Ling did not mislead me over PKFZ land price

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KUALA LUMPUR: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad told the High Court that his former transport minister did not mislead him over the purchase price of the 404.4ha land for the Port Klang Free Zone project.

Dr Mahathir said the project was an urgent matter and the cabinet, after a delay of three years, had decided to buy it from a property owner in 2002.

Dr Mahathir, who was premier between 1981 and 2003, said the attorney-general had commented on hanky-panky about the project, there were ideas of compulsory acquisition and there were a lot of appeals.

"Jebel Ali (the investor) had pulled out. The government lost billions of ringgit," he said in response to a question during cross-examination by deputy public prosecutor Tun Majid Tun Hamzah.

Tun Majid had questioned Dr Mahathir whether he still felt misled by Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik despite he (Tun Majid) having shown documents to that effect.

He had produced documents from the Valuation and Property

Services Department which had proposed that the property could be purchased at RM25 per square foot for a 10-year bond period while RM25.82 psf for a 15-year term.

Tun Majid also showed letters from Dr Ling to Dr Mahathir in April and June 2002 which revealed that the department's recommendations were not clearly reflected.

Dr Mahathir said there was a view that RM1.088 billion to purchase the land was viable.

"The cabinet had to make a decision. At that price the project was viable, although high."

Dr Mahathir said due to delays and objections the cabinet could not decide. He said the cabinet finally decided to purchase the land from Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd (KDSB). The decision to purchase was made on Nov 6, 2002.

"So, I disagree that it was misled," he said.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir dismissed a suggestion by Tun Majid that he was not a truthful witness.

Hearing before High Court judge Datuk Ahmadi Asnawi continues. +



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