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Dr M: I may be as good as a schoolboy

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KUALA LUMPUR: Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was "as good as a schoolboy" in his understanding of accounting terms at the time the controversial Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) project was deliberated, the High Court heard yesterday.

Mahathir, who was testifying for the defence in former transport minister Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik's trial for cheating, said when questioned by Deputy Solicitor General II Datuk Tun Majid Tun Hamzah that he understood that the cash price of the land was RM21 psf, and that RM25 psf referred to the land's "contract price"

However, last October, Mahathir had said he understood RM25 psf was cash price.

When Tun Majid pointed out the contradiction, Mahathir said: "I am not an accountant, these (are) technical words used by accountants and you get mixed up. I may have made a mistake with technical terms."

When Tun Majid suggested

that Mahathir was being untruthful, Mahathir replied: "I beg your pardon but I am being truthful. I am merely stating that I may have used these terms inaccurately because I was not familiar with these terms.

"Schoolboys may understand cash but may not understand cash price, contract price and special price.

"I may be as good as a schoolboy at that time."

He reiterated that he was not misled by Ling with regards to the price and purchase of the 404.7ha land in Pulau Indah where the PKFZ mega distribution hub was to be built.

Ling, who is also former MCA chief, is charged under Sections 417 and 418 of the Penal Code for concealing facts about an additional 7.5% interest, and for deceiving the cabinet into believing the land was priced at RM25 psf when he knew the actual land price was RM21 psf 'special value', as stated by the Valuation and Property Services Department (JPPH) report.

The hearing before Justice Datuk Ahmadi Asnawi continues.