

**Dr M: Police Told Me Dr Ling Would Not Have Been Charged If...
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 8 (Bernama) -- Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad told the High Court here today that a police officer had told him that Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik would not have been prosecuted if his (Dr Mahathir's) police statement had been recorded earlier.

Dr Mahathir, 87, who gave evidence as the fourth defence witness in the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) trial, said the police recorded his statement after Dr Ling was charged in 2010.

"I remember one of the three officers saying that if I had made the remarks earlier, they would not have charged Dr Ling," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the police had recorded his statement either at the end of last year or early this year over the case and that they had recorded his statement twice.

He identified one of the officers as Supt R.Rajagopal.

Dr Mahathir, who was also the Finance Minister at the time of the case, said after he read newspaper reports about Dr Ling being charged in court, Dr Ling had come to see him.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir had told the court that the PKFZ was a very good project for the country and that he had gone to the Jebel Ali Free Zone in Dubai twice.

Asked by Dr Ling's counsel Wong Kian Kheong whether any minister had complained about the project, Dr Mahathir said: "No."

He also said he did not lodge any police report against Dr Ling and no minister had informed him that Dr Ling had cheated.

Ling, who was transport minister for 17 years from 1986, is charged with cheating the government by not disclosing to the Cabinet, an additional interest rate of 7.5 per cent per annum on the purchase price of the land for the PKFZ project, which had been fixed at

RM1,088,456,000 by the Valuation and Property Services Department (JPPH), based on RM25 (per sq ft psf), inclusive of the coupon/interest rates.

He also faces two alternative (amended) charges of cheating and intentionally not disclosing to the Cabinet that the 7.5 per cent per annum was an additional interest rate on the land price.

He is alleged to have committed the offences at the fourth floor of the Prime Minister's Office, Perdana Putra building in Putrajaya, between Sept 25 and Nov 6, 2002.

Regarding a letter from Dr Ling, dated June 29, 2002, which contained the RM25 psf rate for the land acquisition and 7.5 percent per annum interest rate, Dr Mahathir said he did not receive any complaint from any officer from the Finance Ministry.

"Nobody told me that RM1.088 billion was the total cost," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that the cabinet was not bound by the JPPH report to acquire the land in Pulau Indah.

Wong:"As then Finance Minister, were you in favour of compulsory acquiring the land for PKFZ project?"

Dr Mahathir:"Normally no, because the valuation officer wanted to help the government to save money.

Dr Mahathir also said that he would not undervalue the land.

"Well as a politician, I depend on popularity. I would not want to undervalue the land as it will not make me popular and my status depends on popularity," he said.

Judge Datuk Ahmadi Asnawi set Tuesday for continuation of Dr Mahathir's testimony.

Meanwhile, at the start of today's proceedings, Ahmadi said a decision on the prosecution's application to impeach the testimony of former cabinet minister Tan Sri Kadir Sheikh Fadzir would be made at the end of the defence's case.

Prior to that, Ahmadi had asked Kadir to clarify his testimony that the interest rate of 7.5 per cent in the purchase of the land was final when he had not said this in his cautioned statement to the police.

Kadir replied that he was making an overall statement based on his experience and that that he did not remember about the case being related to Dr Ling.

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