

**Dr Ling Is An Honest Person, Says Dr Mahathir  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 9 (Bernama) -- Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad described Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik as an honest person, at the High Court today.

Responding to Dr Ling's counsel Wong Kian Kheong as to his personal opinion of his client , Dr Mahathir, 87, said he had known Dr Ling for 30 years and the former Transport Minister also did his job well, especially in developing Port Klang.

The fourth defence witness was resuming his testimony during the Port Klang Free Zone corruption trial.

Prior to this question however, there was a tense moment in the proceedings, when deputy public prosecutor Datuk Tun Abdul Majid Tun Hamzah objected to Wong's question of "Was Ling capable of cheating?".

Pointing at Dr Ling in the dock and raising his tone, Tun Abdul Majid said: "Who knows if he (Dr Ling) is capable or not but he (Dr Ling) knows."

Tun Abdul Majid's objection shocked the audience in the public gallery, some of whom started talking loudly until Judge Datuk Ahmadi Asnawi ordered them to be silent.

Meanwhile, earlier in the proceedings when Dr Mahathir was shown two summarised notes dated Oct 29 2002 on the Pulau Indah land acquisition, he said that none of the Finance Ministry officers had complained of a mistake or inaccurate and misleading statements in the document.

He said that he usually had a discussion with the officers before cabinet meetings.

Questioned as to whether he had lodged a police report about the two notes containing a factual lie, Dr Mahathir said: "No."

He added that the Cabinet Ministers had also not complained about being cheated or misled by the documents.

Dr Mahathir further stated that his special advisor Tan Sri Ali Abu Hassan had studied the document and informed him the PKFZ project was viable; agreed to the land being acquired on the terms contained therein, which among others included a 'willing buyer-willing seller' basis; land price of RM25 per square feet (psf) and a repayment period of 15 years.

He said Ali usually reported to him on any proposed projects but he (Dr Mahathir) could not recall if Ali had ever complained of a mistake in the PKFZ project.

Dr Mahathir reiterated his testimony of yesterday saying on Oct 2 2002 the Cabinet had decided to acquire the land at RM25 psf with a 15-year deferred payment.

He also said the RM25 psf rate was excluding interest as the price was based on cash purchase.

The total price of the land at RM1.088 million was also excluding interest, he added.

Dr Mahathir said none of the Cabinet Ministers complained about the price as being too high and the decision was reached 'collectively and unanimously'.

Dr 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 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.

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