

Ling wouldn't be charged if cops had seen me first
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KUALA LUMPUR: THE High Court was told yesterday that Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik would not have been charged if police had recorded the statement of former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad much earlier.

In revealing this, Dr Mahathir, the fourth defence witness in the cheating trial, said he was told this by a police officer in the investigating team.

"I remember one of the three officers saying that Dr Ling would not have been charged if my statement was recorded much earlier," he said when examined by lawyer Wong Kian Kheong.

Wong: Were the remarks made by the investigating officer Superintendent R. Rajagopal?

Dr Mahathir: I cannot remember.

Dr Ling was first charged in the Sessions Court in Putrajaya in July 2010. The case was transferred to the High Court, here, four months later.

Police recorded Dr Mahathir's statement twice, last year and early this year.

Dr Ling, 69, is charged with cheating the cabinet by concealing that a 7.5 per cent interest rate per year was an additional interest rate to purchase the 404.4 ha land for the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) project.

The public prosecutor contends that Dr Ling knew that the Valuation and Property Services Department's letters in September and October 2000 had determined the land price at RM25 psf and Dr Ling had dishonestly induced the cabinet to give its consent to the Port Klang Authority (PKA) to buy the property from Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd (KDSB).

As a result, PKA paid KDSB RM1.808 billion for the property, in excess of RM720 million due to double interest.

The offence was allegedly committed in the Prime Minister's Department between Sept 22, 2002 and Nov 6, 2002.

Dr Mahathir, who was the fourth prime minister between 1981 and 2003, said he did not receive any complaint from cabinet ministers and Finance Ministry officials accusing Dr Ling of cheating or deceiving the government.

The 87-year was also finance minister and special functions minister between 2001 and 2003.

Dr Mahathir said the cabinet was not bound by the (Valuation and Property Services) department's report to acquire the land, adding that the government wanted to buy the land on a willing buyer and willing seller basis from KDSB.

Wong: As the then finance minister, were you in favour of compulsorily acquiring the land for the PKFZ project?

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

As a politician, Dr Mahathir said he depended on his popularity and that he would not undervalue the land.

Hearing continues before judge Datuk Ahmadi Asnawi.

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