

**Dr Ling Did Not Alter Any Papers, Says Dr Mahathir**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 20 (Bernama) -- Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad told the High Court here that former transport minister Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik did not make any alteration to the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) project papers.

Dr Mahathir said the papers were prepared by a senior officer in the ministry of transport before being presented to Dr Ling for signing.

In today's proceeding, Dr Mahathir explain the mechanism of papers prepared before presented to the cabinet for decision.

"At no time did the minister of transport reject anything which was prepared by the ministry's secretary-general. In this case we sometimes find discrepancies between the notes submitted to the cabinet and the vendor.

"The agreement was written by the secretary-general based on what he believed and concluded after meeting the vendor," he said when responding to Ling's lawyer Wong Kian Kheong during re-examination.

"In that meeting he may think that he has the consent of the vendor but the vendor may not have agreed. I believe the vendor disagreed with the result of the meeting and wanted to appeal. So, you have a discrepancy where the vendor has not agreed but there is letter saying it was agreed," he added.

Dr Mahathir also said that there was the problem of the minister not attending the meeting but signing without any objection before the paper came to the cabinet.

"The minister signed without any alteration. That is how papers are prepared. The minister also has the right to correct but in this case there was no evidence that the minister was asked to make changes. It was put before the cabinet which considered the papers knowing full well it was signed by the minister.

"That has happened to me when I received papers from the minister of finance. If I believed there was a correction, I have to tell them. In my experience I have never rejected the papers prepared by my officers. If you say that the minister was trying to cheat the cabinet, that may well imply that the officers also colluded but there is no evidence in this case," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said the cabinet was not bound by the government valuation report in determining the PKFZ land price.

"We take into consideration but are not bound. The decision to purchase the land for the project was made by consensus," he said.

Dr Mahathir, the fourth defence witness completed his evidence today.

Dr Ling, 70, 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, knowing that it 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 was 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.

The hearing before Judge Datuk Ahmadi Asnawi will resume on Mac 12.

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