

**Najib and Badawi's lawyers seeking to set aside subpoena for PKFZ trial**  
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**By Ida Lim**

KUALA LUMPUR, March 12 – The lawyers for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and his predecessor Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi have indicated that they want to set aside the subpoenas to get their clients to testify in a cheating trial for the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ), lawyer Wong Kian Kheong has said.

Wong, who is former transport minister Dr Ling Liong Sik's lead counsel, had on February 20, told the court that Najib and Abdullah are part of a list of at least six more defence witnesses to be called.

Wong today told High Court judge Datuk Ahmadi Asnawi that he needs to interview Najib and Abdullah, before getting them to testify in Dr Ling's defence.

He said that he has yet to receive an official response from the lawyers for the duo.

When met outside the courtroom today, Wong confirmed that subpoenas had been issued but not yet been served, pointing out that an interview needs to be done first.

Dr Ling, who served as transport minister for 17 years from January 1986 to May 2003, is charged with deceiving the Cabinet into approving the purchase of 999.5 acres of land for the PKFZ project, which had resulted in wrongful losses for the government.

The project, initially estimated at RM1.1 billion after it was mooted by Dr Ling in 1997, more than quadrupled in cost to RM4.6 billion by 2007.

A position review by top accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) revealed in 2009 that the total cost including interests from debt repayments could reach RM12.5 billion.

Since December 2009, six individuals have been charged in court including ex-MCA president Dr Ling, and his successor as transport minister, former MCA deputy chief Tan Sri Chan Kong Choy. Both are

accused of lying to the Cabinet.

Dr Ling also faces two alternative charges of deceiving the Cabinet into believing that the terms of the purchase — at RM25 psf plus 7.5 per cent interest — were acknowledged and agreed to by the JPPH despite knowing that there was no such agreement.

He faces a possible jail term of up to seven years, or a fine, or both, if convicted on the first charge under section 418 of the Penal Code.

The alternative charges carry a lighter sentence of five years' jail, or a fine, or both.

The trial before High Court judge Datuk Ahmadi Asnawi resumes on March 18.

Other defence witnesses expected to be called next week are Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd (KDSB)'s deputy CEO Datuk Faizal Abdullah, expert witness Sajjad Akhtar from a Singapore-based accounting firm.

Former Cabinet minister Tan Sri Fong Chan Onn today testified that Dr Ling did not deceive him over the PKFZ land buy, while another Cabinet minister, Datuk Seri Rais Yatim, has not been called to testify yet.

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