

19/02/1997

Need to extend Telekom contract probe: Anwar

PRELIMINARY investigations into alleged impropriety in the award of a contract by Telekom Malaysia Bhd to Swedish multinational Ericsson indicate that there are grounds to investigate further, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said yesterday.

He said although no proof of impropriety has been obtained, there is basis in terms of transparency or procedures that needed to be observed which must be further investigated.

Speaking to reporters after opening the Securities Commission's Conference on Over-The-Counter Markets in Kuala Lumpur, Anwar said he has been receiving reports on the progress of investigations, the latest being last week.

"We have asked them (investigators) to speed up, but they will have to look at the documents which are still available, fortunately, but they go back over the last four, five years," he added.

Asked if investigations revealed there had been a breach in the tendering procedure, Anwar said it would be premature for him to comment as the investigations have not been completed.

On investigations into alleged log smuggling in Tawau, Sabah, he said initial reports have been submitted to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Investigations into the alleged log smuggling are being carried out by the police, the Anti-Corruption Agency, a Treasury Department committee, and a state committee including the Malaysian Timber Industry Board and the Ministry of Primary Industries.

"I myself am impatient because I want this matter cleared, the sooner the better," Anwar said.

Asked if there is any change in government policy in the wake of recent aborted bank mergers, he said incentives given to bigger or Tier-1 banks and similar assistance are still in place.

"We will continue to emphasise the need to change and undertake the necessary measures, either to merge or to grow bigger, and this I think we will not compromise as a policy," Anwar said.

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