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Anwar-Telekom

TELEKOM MALAYSIA AND TREASURY DIRECTED TO EXPEDITE INVESTIGATIONS

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 18 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today that the investigation into an allegation of impropriety in a tender awarded by Telekom Malaysia Berhad to Swedish multinational Ericsson Telecommunications has been classified as an "urgent matter."

Anwar, who is Finance Minister, said that Telekom Malaysia and the Contracts Division in the Treasury had been instructed to expedite the investigation and to submit a report as soon as possible.

"I have asked for it to be speeded up. It not necessary to take too much time because all the records are still there. I have classified it as an urgent matter," he told reporters after performing the ground-breaking for the redevelopment of Wisma AIA here.

On Wednesday, Anwar said that the government had directed that an investigation be conducted into the alleged discrepancies in the award of a contract by Telekom Malaysia to Ericsson for the supply of telecommunications equipment.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said in California that he had been briefed by Anwar on the matter.

Dr Mahathir said that it should be investigated.

Asked whether a report he has received contains allegations against any Cabinet minister or senior officials of Telekom Malaysia, Anwar said: "There were references but there were no specific allegations. I've not seen the detailed report."

As to whether the preliminary report necessitated further investigations, he said: "We should be transparent. If there is any report, we should take it up."

"I don't think we should be unduly concerned but we should be positive and we should take it up seriously," he said.

Anwar said that the investigation should serve as a lesson to all parties not to regard tender awards as insignificant because in the event of allegations of impropriety, the government would initiate investigations even if it had taken place some time back.

"This is a case of four of five years ago. Therefore, a check has to be made as to whether procedures had been observed or not. I have also asked the ministry's Contracts Division to conduct an investigation and check relevant factors," he said.

Anwar said that according to procedure, all tender awards had to be approved by the Tender Board before final approval was given by the Treasury.

"Therefore the investigation will cover the question of whether the procedures were observed, whether there were discrepancies at any level, be it the Telekom level or Treasury level, whether there was actually a reference to the Treasury at all," he said when asked regarding the alleged discrepancies.

He said that it was too early for him to say whether all procedures had been observed and it was also difficult for him to ascertain whether all procedures were observed before submission to the Finance Minister for approval.

"It actually involved the company's Tender Committee, the Technical Committee and the Treasury. Then again there are certain criteria...some are to be referred to the Treasury, some not," he said.

He said that all speculations on which contract and the discrepancies involved should cease as an investigation was being conducted.

Asked to comment on the statement by Works Minister Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu that award of contracts by privatised bodies were directly referred to the Finance Minister, Anwar said that not all of them needed to be referred to the Finance Minister.

"That is why we have to investigate. I think Datuk Samy has jumped to a conclusion," he said.

"If procedures have been observed and actually ascertained, I will have no fear but I cannot be sure of all aspects...we will have to check it out first," he said.

Samy Vellu, when asked to comment on the matter last night, said that he was not involved and not aware of the alleged discrepancies believed to have taken place when he was the Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Minister.

Anwar, when asked whether there were offers from any party to take over Telekom Malaysia, said: "I'm not aware of it." -- BERNAMA

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