

09 MAR 1999

Court-Anwar (Azmin)

ANWAR GAVE ME RM3,000 A MONTH FOR PETTY CASH, SAYS AZMIN

KUALA LUMPUR, March 9 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's former private secretary was given RM3,000 a month by the former deputy prime minister to use as petty cash and small donations to the poor seeking help at his office, the High Court here heard today.

Mohamed Azmin Ali said he declared the amount as income to the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) to account for the money given to him to hold.

He denied a suggestion by senior deputy public prosecutor Datuk Abdul Gani Patail that the money was given him by Anwar for his own use.

Azmin is the 14th witness in the trial of Anwar, 51, on four counts of corrupt practice for allegedly abusing his position to interfere in police investigations into allegations of sexual misconduct against him.

Azmin, 34, said under re-examination that the money was not for himself but for use as donations to the poor who came to the office, for wedding feasts, bus fares and as petty cash.

He said the government did not give allocations for such things.

Earlier, when Gani suggested that he knew police were investigating his and his wife's assets and incomes, Azmin quipped "My Lord, what has investigation on my assets got to do with taking photographs of my private part."

Gani said Azmin was answering a question with a question and asked the court to record that the witness was evading the question.

On his income, Azmin, who said he was a teacher for a day at Sekolah Menengah Sains Selangor before being appointed special officer to the education minister on Oct 2, 1987, repeatedly said that he could not remember how much he was paid.

When Anwar's counsel, Christopher Fernando, objected to the question, saying that it was beyond the issue before the court, Gani said the defence had asked Ummi Hafilda Ali and Azizan Abu Bakar (who had accused Anwar of sexual misconduct) on their financial status.

Gani said the prosecution wanted to show Azmin's credibility and that he was a partisan witness.

"Our evidence shows that he received money as part of his income from the accused," he added.

Azmin said his gross pay at the end of 1997 was in the region of RM5,000 and his last grade as a government officer was N1, personal-to-holder.

His other income came from his wife who was a consultant at Phileo Allied Bhd with a monthly salary of RM5,000 and from her business and shares, he said.

He agreed with Gani that he had declared his assets to the ACA but could not remember when.

Fernando objected on ground of irrelevance but Justice S. Augustine Paul allowed the question after Gani said it was to show the witness' credibility.

Earlier, Azmin disagreed with Gani's suggestion that he knew that he was arrested in connection with investigations into his and his wife's assets and incomes for the years 1992 to 1995.

Azmin said police remanded him for seven days under section 117 of the Criminal Procedure Code after their application to hold him for 14 days was rejected by the Magistrate's Court.

He said the magistrate released him during an application for extension

of his remand on Sept 22 last year after he appeared before the magistrate with his counsel, C.V. Prabhakaran, to plead his case.

Azmin said he used the opportunity to tell the magistrate what the police had done to him and sought permission to submit further but he agreed with Gani that the magistrate's records did not show that he had applied for more time to submit.

"I told the magistrate that my remand should not be extended because of the cruel acts and threats of the police who forced me to make a confession involving saudara Anwar," he said.

Asked about his relationship with Anwar, Azmin said he was introduced to the former finance minister by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He had a close relationship with Dr Mahathir, his wife and family, he said but was stopped from proceeding further by Paul because he was not answering the question.

Azmin said that when he was a student at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, United States, he had contacted the prime minister by phone to ask Anwar to speak at a student gathering in the US after Anwar turned it down.

"The prime minister directed Anwar to go there. That's how I met saudara Anwar," he said.

Before the court adjourned, Paul rejected the defence's application for warrants of arrest to be issued against two witnesses who failed to turn up because of technical errors.

Hearing continues at 9am tomorrow.

-- BERNAMA

NHD JK