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Anwar: My answer to question angered Ministers

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's reply to a question by a Malaysian student in London on corruption, nepotism and cronyism angered some members of the Cabinet, the High Court heard today.

Anwar said the question pertained to these topics as well as Lim Guan Eng's case.

(Lim, who is former Member of Parliament for Kota Melaka, was jailed 18 months for committing offences under the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 and Sedition Act 1948).

On Lim's case, Anwar said, he told the student he was in a predicament, but that Malaysia should continue in its reform of the legal system.

Anwar said on corruption, nepotism and cronyism, he had explained that these practices should be abandoned or they would result in a loss to the country.

Judge Datuk Arifin Jaka had earlier asked Anwar's leading counsel Christopher Fernando for the relevancy of these statements saying that Anwar was not in court to tell about his predicament but answer the charges he was facing.

Fernando said Anwar's response to the questions had angered some members of the Cabinet and certain other institutions.

Arifin, however, said he did not think it was relevant.

To another question, Anwar said he also raised the issue on the integrity of the Attorney-General's Chambers and the judiciary at the Asian Law Ministers Conference.

Fernando then asked Anwar to tell the gist of what he had said at the conference but Arifin ruled that this, too, was irrelevant.

Counsel, however, contended that it was relevant to show that Anwar's action caused some individuals to feel threatened.

Karpal Singh, another of Anwar's counsel, said the question was important having regard to the letter sent to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad by the then Deputy Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob (see accompanying story).

He said taking such a matter to other forums would compound the anger and as a result the "conspirators" would be "more emboldened now" to ensure that the conspiracy against Anwar was fruitful.

"The motive to overthrow Anwar would be taken further ten fold ... so it is relevant," he submitted.

After Arifin allowed the question, Anwar said he did not make specific reference to the letter but moved to an open forum and one of it was the conference.

He said his concern was that institutions such as the A-G's Chambers and the judiciary "should remain incorruptible and with the highest integrity."

"I also mentioned the term judicial indiscretion," he said.

Asked what triggered him to make such a speech, Anwar said discussions on selective prosecution and the role of the judiciary had increased then.

He said he also had submitted to the Cabinet the decision of the Ayer Molek case.

Arifin, however, interjected and said: "I think he is going too far."

Fernando then proceeded to the next question.

The judge adjourned hearing about 3.30pm after Anwar complained that he was not feeling well.

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