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Court-Anwar (Daim)

DAIM ANGRY OVER TAKEOVER OF NSTP GROUP, SAYS ANWAR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 28 (Bernama) -- Tun Daim Zainuddin was angry when former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim got involved in efforts to take over The New Straits Times Press (NSTP) (Malaysia) Berhad group, the High Court here was told today.

Anwar said he had a big problem with Daim over control of the company after the prime minister asked him to free the company from the group controlling it then.

"My Lord, it involved the manipulation of the biggest media group in the country which was then controlled by a corporate group under Tun Daim. I was asked to discuss with its editorial team to take over the company from the group under Tun Daim," he said under examination by his leading counsel Christopher Fernando.

Daim, who is now First Finance Minister, was not holding any cabinet post then.

Anwar, who was sacked as deputy prime minister and finance minister on Sept 2 last year on moral grounds, was making his defence in his sodomy trial which entered its 67th day today.

Anwar, 52, and his adopted brother, Sukma Darmawan Sasmitaat Madja, 38, are being jointly tried for sodomising Azizan Abu Bakar, 39, the former driver of Anwar's wife, at Sukma's apartment in Tivoli Villa, Bangsar, here, one night at 7.45 between January and March, 1993.

Sukma, a businessman, is also charged with abetting Anwar to sodomise Azizan at the same place and time.

Anwar said the company eventually came under a company called Real Mild with 70 per cent of its shares held by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and functioned under MRCB while the remaining equity was distributed among four of the company's editors and managers of the company, he said.

"Tun Daim was of course angry and assumed that I controlled NST when in fact it was held by Dr Mahathir," he added.

Anwar said, however, that Daim still had a big influence in the company through his proxy, Datuk A.Kadir Jasin, the NSTP group editor-in-chief

Earlier, when replying to Justice Datuk Arifin Jaka's question as to the relevancy of this evidence to the sodomy charge, Fernando said it was relevant to show the controversy which resulted in the fabrication of charges against the former deputy prime minister.

Anwar, who had earlier named Daim as one of the master conspirators in a plot to topple him, said his evidence was also to establish Daim's motive.

Fernando also told the court that the defence would be calling Daim to the witness stand.

Anwar said Daim had also written him a letter regarding several decisions which he disapproved of including the criticism of the Perwaja steel mill cost approved by the prime minister as excessive.

At this juncture, Arifin chided the defence for giving too many examples to show that Daim was so angry with Anwar that he conspired to topple him.

However, Fernando replied that this was important to strengthen the defence on the conspiracy theory.

Anwar said Daim also touched on the approval of lands in Kuala Lumpur and Langkawi to Tan Sri Vincent Tan and a power generation project in Perlis involving the YTL group.

He said Daim raised these matters because Daim wanted the projects for himself and asked him to raise the matter with the prime minister, causing Dr Mahathir to be angry with him (Anwar) because "these were the projects of important cronies".

He said that as expected, Dr Mahathir was angry and unhappy every time he raised the matter in 1995, 1996 and 1997.

"PM was unhappy with my and the Finance Ministry's decision to appoint an independent auditor from Price Waterhouse to scrutinise because all decisions (relating to Perwaja) were made directly by the prime minister on the suggestion of Tan Sri Eric Chia," he said.

Anwar said Dr Mahathir also told him that he had no jurisdiction over lands approved to Tan.

Asked whether the prime minister's relationship with him had changed, Anwar said it was not obvious then "although maybe it was not as good as before".

Fernando: "Was he unhappy with you for bringing this matter to him?"

Anwar: My Lord, I only gave an opinion, I did not oppose the prime minister's decision but I had to give views which I believed could help in a clean decision. He (prime minister) was unhappy because to him, a deputy prime minister or minister should only "listen and follow".

The hearing was adjourned to tomorrow after senior deputy public prosecutor Datuk Abdul Gani Patail applied to discuss in chamber Daim's letter which Fernando wanted to tender in court.

-- BERNAMA

SBB JK