

02 MAY 1999

Mahathir-Cronies

DR MAHATHIR HAS PROOF OF ASSETS OF ANWAR'S CRONIES

JITRA, May 2 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that he has proof of the acquisition of properties and the huge contracts secured by cronies of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The prime minister said that his knowledge of the matter was based on asset declaration forms and the list of contractors awarded huge projects.

"I knew their position. For example, Anwar's former political secretary, secretaries...we know from their declaration of assets," he told a news conference at the Sultan Abdul Halim Airport in Kepala Batas, near here.

(Asset declaration forms are normally filled by government employees, elected representatives, executive councillors, menteri besar and cabinet ministers).

"A crony tutored by Anwar to topple me, I discovered has over RM230 million in cash," Dr Mahathir said before leaving for Kuala Lumpur after a three-day visit.

In his speech when opening the Kubang Pasu Umno divisional conference here yesterday, Dr Mahathir, who is the head of the division, said that a crony of a former national leader has cash amounting to RM230 million.

Asked by reporters for his identity, Dr Mahathir declined to reveal his name but said that he was a former Umno leader and had served as chairman of several companies.

The prime minister said that the person was very close to Anwar and had been used by Anwar to make him unpopular by making allegations that his government was corrupt and he had practised nepotism.

"Actually, the person who clearly and obviously has cronies is Anwar Ibrahim...people who secured huge contracts are his supporters," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that when he asked Anwar how that person came into such a large sum of money, Anwar had, with a note of surprise, stated that he did not know.

The prime minister said that he was aware of the position of these people including several of Anwar's cronies who had been given priority in the award of projects.

He said that hundreds of people were in the list of contractors but only certain people secured the projects.

"As such, I had to release the lists of those who were successful in securing government contracts at the last Umno general assembly and in the end it was proven that those awarded various contracts were Anwar's men," he said.

Asked whether he would direct the Anti Corruption Agency to conduct investigations into the matter, Dr Mahathir said that the government would investigate and if the assets were acquired not in a suspicious manner, the government would not take any action.

As to whether there is a possibility that the government was unable to trace more of the assets belonging to this group of people like cash deposits overseas, the prime minister said that there could be a possibility.

Dr Mahathir also said that the former deputy prime minister had directed several companies to appoint his men as directors of the companies and paid high salaries.

For instance, he said, Anwar's speechwriter Dr Munawar Anees, who was

jailed for six months for committing an act of gross indecency by allowing Anwar to sodomise him, was paid a high salary by the New Straits Times on Anwar's directive whereas he had been engaged by Anwar.

Asked to comment on criticisms by several delegates at the divisional conference yesterday over the various projects implemented by Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid said to be of not much benefit, Dr Mahathir said that they did not actually understand and did not obtain proper explanation on the objective of the projects and their benefits.

Among the projects criticised is the padi cultivation on rooftop project at Paya Pahlawan here said to be unsuitable and a waste of taxpayers' money.

Admitting that the project in Paya Pahlawan was mooted by him, the prime minister said that the swampy nature of the land there was suitable to be promoted as a tourism site.

He however said that before efforts were made to attract tourists there, facilities like for water recreational activities should be set up.

"Unfortunately, people who do not understand are now making up stories that some others were actually convinced," he said.

On a suggestion by a delegate that Sanusi be replaced, Dr Mahathir said: "I have not asked him to resign".

He said that in Umno, there were people who were not satisfied with a certain leader and the easy way out was to ask the leader to resign and replaced by someone they favour.

-- BERNAMA

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