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Rahim admits hitting Anwar after grave provocation

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Former Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Noor has admitted through his lawyer to assaulting Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim last year after grave provocation.

Abdul Rahim's lawyer Teh Poh Teik disclosed this to the Royal Commission of Inquiry, which is investigating injuries sustained by the former Deputy Prime Minister while under arrest.

After Teh had cross-examined Anwar, commission member, former Court of Appeal judge Datuk Mahadev Shankar, asked whether his client was admitting to the matter as his questions seemed to suggest that Anwar was hit by Abdul Rahim.

To this, Teh replied: "Yes, that is my instruction... he acted under grave provocation."

The other members of the three-man panel are former Chief Justice of Malaya Tan Sri Anuar Zainal Abidin, who is heading it, and Pantai Medical Centre consultant orthopaedic surgeon Datuk Dr Yeoh Poh Hong.

The inquiry, which resumed today to enable Anwar to be questioned by counsel representing various individuals, also attracted a larger than normal crowd as people began queuing up as early as 7am.

Anwar's wife, Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail, and their eldest daughter Nurul Izzah were among family members in the public gallery.

The first question in relation to the provocation was when Teh asked: "I put it to you that on the night in question in your cell, you were hit by Abdul Rahim because you provoked him."

Anwar replied: "I am a bit stunned ... (referring to the statement put to him). There was absolutely no conversation at all in the cell."

He denied he had provoked Abdul Rahim by uttering "Ni, bapa anjing" (Here's the father of dogs).

Anwar also disagreed with counsel's suggestion that he had uttered the words when Abdul Rahim was about to remove his blindfold. Anwar said "there was no attempt to remove the blindfold (then)".

Teh: When he heard this (derogatory remark), he (Abdul Rahim) lost his control and his cool and hit you.

Anwar: I disagree.

Teh: This episode happened so fast that Abdul Rahim was pulled away. I put it to you.

Anwar: Not a few seconds but a few minutes.

To another question on his police report on the assault, Teh asked why Anwar mentioned five strikes and not seven as he had told the inquiry.

Anwar, however, replied: "I did not say only five."

He also denied that when police Special Force Commander acting SAC 1 Meor Chek Hussien Mahayuddin went to his house on Sept 20, he had uttered "anjing IGP" (IGP's dog) and "anjing kerajaan" (Government's dog) after Meor said the IGP had given instructions to arrest him.

He also replied: "That was not my response."

To another question whether he had in his roadshows and Press conferences attacked the police force, Anwar said he only attacked the behaviour of some elements in the police force.

This, he said, was for their intimidation, harassment and for forcibly obtaining confessions from individuals to incriminate him.

When his counsel Karpal Singh asked him why Abdul Rahim would want to attack him, Anwar gave a lengthy explanation.

"I have held Rahim with very high regard as a professional police officer.

"He has had been very co-operative and assisted me in the course of my duty as Deputy Prime Minister," he said.

Anwar said in fact as early as August last year, Abdul Rahim came to the office and had a "brotherly chat" appealing to him to resolve problems he (Anwar) had with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad politically.

"He held my hand with some affection and said `Sir, you are going to be our next PM and I sincerely urge you to settle your differences with the PM'," he said.

Anwar said after that, the unfolding of events showed hostility on the part of Abdul Rahim and some senior police officers involved in the investigations of the "50 Dalil" book (50 Dalil Mengapa Anwar Tidak Boleh Jadi PM or 50 Reasons Why Anwar Cannot Become PM).

"The only incident ... that was a bit tense was after the arrest of Nalla (Datuk S. Nallakaruppan)... Abdul Rahim returned my call ... I knew that the arrest was an attempt to forcibly get Nalla to make statements to incriminate me," Anwar said.

(Nallakaruppan is the former public affairs director of Magnum Corporation Bhd and described by Anwar as his occasional tennis partner.) (He was recently sentenced to 42 months' jail by the High Court after he pleaded guilty to an amended charge of unlawful possession of 125 bullets.)

Anwar said the police then started arresting both his secretaries at the Deputy Prime Minister's office and the Treasury and his adopted brother (Sukma Darmawan Sasmitaat Madja).

Asked by Anuar why he felt that Abdul Rahim was so much against him, Anwar replied:

"He (Abdul Rahim) has instructions from his boss."

Earlier, before being cross-examined by Teh, Anwar sought permission from the panel to clarify certain matters and to give extra information to which he took about an hour.

Anwar said he gave his first detailed statement on the assault to (the then) ACP Mat Zain Ibrahim who headed a special investigation team formed to investigate the injuries.

However, he said, he did not disclose some details particularly with reference to names of senior police officers.

"I had some reservations because it was an internal police investigating team set up under the instructions of the Prime Minister who had earlier said it was possible that the injuries could have been self-inflicted," he said.

He expressed hope the commission would take a look at the statement made by him to the special police investigation team.

Anwar was also allowed to see pictures of him after the assault and when they were handed to him, he said: "Oh My God ... Lebih teruk lagi (It is more terrible)... Mat Zain saw me later."

To this, Shankar remarked "pictures are worth a thousand words" and Anuar said that they were very much aware of the injuries he had sustained.

Continuing his explanation, Anwar said he was also informed by policemen in Bukit Aman that the other person present in the lock-up when he was assaulted was Federal Criminal Investigations Department director Datuk Yaacob Mohd Amin.

"The (then) IGP on Sept 25 made a public statement that I was safe and sound under police custody ... he was lying ... he was aware of the assault but he could still say this publicly," he said.

Anwar said he was charged on Sept 29 last year and his lawyer Raja Aziz Addruse had appealed then to the court to allow him (Anwar) to address directly the court on the assault. He was allowed to do so.

"Prior to that (senior deputy public prosecutor) Datuk Abdul Gani Patail objected ... he said it was a minor injury," he said. How could such comments be made, he added.

However, Shankar said: "If you don't confine yourself ... it will make our task difficult. We are concerned with your direct evidence."

The inquiry continues tomorrow.

(END)