

29/10/1999

'PM was angry when I raised Daim's complaints'

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim incurred the wrath of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he raised complaints made to him by Tun Daim Zainuddin, the High Court heard today.

Anwar said Daim, now First Finance Minister, expressed his unhappiness on several decisions, including approval of land in Kuala Lumpur and Langkawi to businessman Tan Sri Vincent Tan.

He said Daim also alleged that the cost of the Perwaja Steel factory, approved by the Prime Minister, had exceeded by millions from the actual cost.

Anwar, who was making his defence, said Daim also complained about the approval of an independent power producer in Perlis stating that a 60 per cent stake should not have been given to the YTL Group.

On Daim's motive in complaining about these matters to him, Anwar said he was of the opinion that the Minister wanted the projects for himself.

Secondly, he said, he felt Daim had asked him to bring these matters to the Prime Minister's attention so that he (Anwar) would incur Dr Mahathir's wrath.

"These were projects by important cronies," Anwar said.

To a question by leading counsel Christopher Fernando, Anwar said the Prime Minister became angry when he spoke about these matters.

He said he had raised these matters with utmost respect so as not to offend the Prime Minister.

"Certain facts had to be told because as in the case of Perwaja its costs had gone beyond expectation," he said.

He said the Prime Minister was also not happy with his decision to appoint independent auditor Price Waterhouse to look into the Perwaja case as all decisions were made by Dr Mahathir himself on proposals by Tan Sri Eric Chia (Perwaja's then managing director).

On approval of land to Tan, Anwar said the Prime Minister said it was not his jurisdiction.

"I said many were of the opinion that Tan Sri Vincent Tan was getting too many lands and this had also been raised by Daim," he said.

Anwar said as a result of what he told the Prime Minister their relationship suffered and they were not as close as they were before.

"To him (the Prime Minister), his deputy or other Ministers should only hear and follow," he said.

To another question, Anwar said his first major misunderstanding with Daim was about the control of the New Straits Times Press (Malaysia) Bhd.

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 which was under Daim's control.

"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," he said, adding that he was also asked to discuss the takeover with NSTP.

Anwar said the company eventually came under a company called Realmild (M) Sdn Bhd with 70 per cent of its shares held by Dr Mahathir and functioned under Malaysian Resources Corporation Bhd.

He added that the remaining equity was distributed among four of the company's editors and its managers.

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

"However, Daim still has a big influence in the company through his proxy Datuk A. Kadir Jasin, (NSTP group editor-in-chief)."

(END)