

**Anwar slams Finance Ministry over Perwaja
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Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim today blasted the Finance Ministry for its silence on the 2007 Auditor-General's Report on the multi-billion bailout involving government linked company (GLC), Perwaja Steel Sdn Bhd.

Anwar said the report - which revealed that the government is still paying the bailout grant to Perwaja totaling RM3.9 billion up to last year since 1998 - has yet to be explained or discussed in Parliament.

"The ministry has payed Perwaja billions of ringgit from the Employees Provident Fund in grants without approval of the Parliament and it has yet to be tabled for debate until today," he told a press conference later.

"I have raised this so many times. The content of the report raised serious concerns over government handling of the matter but the media have consistently played down the issue," he said.

Describing it as the "arrogance of power", he said this reflected on Deputy Prime Minister and soon-to-be Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's idea of governance - "the monopoly of the media" and the suppression of information critical of the government.

Perwaja lost RM11 billion

Perwaja, a company set up by the government under former premier Dr Mahathir Mohammad, gained prominence for all the wrong reasons when it was revealed that the GLC had scandalously registered losses up to RM11 billion.

Anwar who was then deputy prime minister and finance minister had then instructed that independent audit firm Pricewaterhouse Cooper be hired to probe into the matter.

Findings by the independent audit revealed that there were clear cases of mismanagement, corruption and abuse of power by officials in the GLC.

eric chia court case acquittal 260607 talkingThe Anti-Corruption Agency's investigation into the matter then had company managing director, the late Eric Chia, alleged to be a close associate of Mahathir, arrested and charged with criminal breach of trust involving RM76.4 million.

Chia was alleged to have allowed the payment of RM76.4 million into the account of Frilsham Enterprise Incorporated at the American Express Bank Ltd, Hong Kong for technical aid given by NKK Corporation for the Beam and Section Mill Plant in Gurun, Kedah, although the payment was not required.

Chia was however acquitted on June 26 last year after a court ruled that the prosecution had failed to prove a prima facie case.

"Despite these findings, none of it have been tabled for explanation in the Parliament," said

Anwar

'Gov't favours big businesses'

Anwar also accused the government of favouring "big businesses" over the welfare of the people.

Elaborating, he said the government's move to renegotiate the Power Purchasing Agreement (PPA) with the country's independent power producers (IPPs) to restructure the contract so as to acquire cheaper power source is merely "for show."

anwar ibrahim pkr parliament pc 111108 01"Negotiations have been going on for 10 years and the IPPs are making a lot of profit while the auditor-general's report stated that there were many violations of contract procedures," he said, adding that this too had escaped scrutiny in Parliament.

Opposition MPs have long accused the PPA as unfair since the government has to pay more for gas and oil from domestic IPPs which in turn purchase it at a much lower cost.

Anwar and other Pakatan Rakyat MPs said that the government should review the contract and act firmly against the IPPs so that power can be purchased at a cheaper price.

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