

## **Anwar slams Halim**

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim today slammed Tan Sri Halim Saad for dragging his name into the swirling controversy over the Metramac case.

Calling the move "utterly mischievous", the former deputy prime minister noted that the Court of Appeal had categorically named Tun Daim Zainuddin as the minister who played a pivotal role in the episode, and also made direct references to Halim and his business partner Anuar Othman.

Sankara N. Nair, counsel for Anwar, said in a statement today: "One has to be mindful that this is a judicial finding and not a mere allegation.

"Judicial findings are normally grounded on the reception of sworn evidence given under oath by witnesses and on documents. It is trite that tested and sworn evidence is the entire basis on which three judges of the Court of Appeal substantiated their findings, without fear or favour."

Last Thursday, the Court of Appeal ordered Metramac to pay about RM65 million to Fawziah Holdings in compensation for loss of advertising rights.

The case involved Datuk Fawziah Abdul Karim and her mother Maimon Bee, who were shareholders of Syarikat Teratai K.G. (STKG) Sdn Bhd, now known as Metramac.

In July 1986, Fawziah had obtained a tender to design, build and operate the privatisation of a number of roads.

However, the toll collection was suspended in September 1990 after a demonstration at the Cheras toll plaza.

STKG had spent large sums of money on the project and was in dire straits after the toll collection was suspended. Some RM764 million was supposed to be paid as compensation to STKG, but Court of Appeal judge Datuk Gopal Sri Ram noted that in 1990, Daim had said the Government was in no position to pay the compensation.

STKG was then bought over by Metro Juara for RM97.5 million. Halim and Anuar were the shareholders of Metro Juara. After this, the Government found the money to compensate the company.

Among other things, Sri Ram noted that:

- Halim and Anuar had siphoned RM32.5 million from the company; and,
- Halim and Anuar enjoyed the patronage of Daim.

In a statement on Monday, Halim said Daim had resigned as Minister of Finance on March 14, 1991, and was not involved in any decision to reimburse the RM32.5 million to Anuar and him.

He also said that the decision for Metro Juara to take over the Metramac project was made by the Cabinet and not Daim.

When the revised concession agreement was signed on Feb 13, 1992, the Finance Minister was Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and the Works Minister was Datuk Seri Leo Moggie, said Halim.

Sankara said the Court of Appeal had dealt with facts indicating that Daim approved the deal in 1991, before Anwar became Finance Minister.

"Suffice to say that findings based on sworn evidence are far superior to those of an unsworn Press statement," he said.

Also, he noted that the Court of Appeal stated clearly in its judgment that the problems faced by Fawziah Holdings and the loss of the concession to Halim and related parties started in late 1990, when Daim was still the Finance Minister.

Sri Ram said the takeover of STKG by Metro Juara was executed on Jan 23, 1991.

Anwar also urged the Attorney-General to start immediate investigations into all parties involved in the Metramac case.

"In view of the gravity of the matter and in public interest, and also in light of the serious challenge to the integrity of the judiciary, our client calls on the Government to act immediately by instituting an independent public inquiry into this matter," said Sankara.

Meanwhile, seasoned criminal lawyer Karpal Singh urged Daim and Halim to apply to intervene in the proceedings and put up their defence in court.

"Taking a confrontational stance against Sri Ram demeans judicial independence," he said, adding that putting up a defence in public also eluded the judicial process.

Source:

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