

Declassify Cabinet minutes, says Daim

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Documents will clear the air on Metramac

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Tun Daim Zainuddin has asked the Government to declassify specific Cabinet minutes from 15 years ago, relating to Syarikat Teratai KG (STKG) Sdn Bhd and Metramac Corporation, to clear the air over the issue.

The former finance minister said the Government had taken certain positions on the entire deal involving STKG and Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur, and many questions would be answered if the public could have access to the relevant Cabinet papers.

“My recollection of events and the Cabinet decisions in relation thereto are of 15 years ago and are based on my private documents,” Daim said in an 18-page statement today.

“I do not have the benefit of any Cabinet documents.”

The statement followed a Jan 12 Court of Appeal judgment involving Fawziah Holdings Sdn Bhd and Metramac Corporation Sdn Bhd, in which he was implicated.

In the judgment, Metramac was ordered by Court of Appeal judge Datuk Gopal Sri Ram 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 STKG. STKG was acquired by Metro Juara Sdn Bhd for RM97.5 million, and its name changed to Metramac.

Daim said the termination of the concession agreement with STKG and a fresh contract between Metramac and Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur had been a collective Cabinet decision.

He said it was also the Cabinet which decided that no compensation be payable to STKG, as Government procedure required that

compensation for any party had to be requested by the relevant government agency, not by a private company or an individual.

“Additionally, I had by then already tabled the 1991 Budget, which made no provisions for compensations,” he said.

Daim said Fawziah had also confirmed that she was similarly informed of the Cabinet’s decision that no money would be paid as compensation when she met the then deputy prime minister and three other ministers.

According to Daim, STKG signed a concession agreement with DBKL on Nov 20 1987 to construct, finance and manage a number of toll roads and interchanges in Kuala Lumpur.

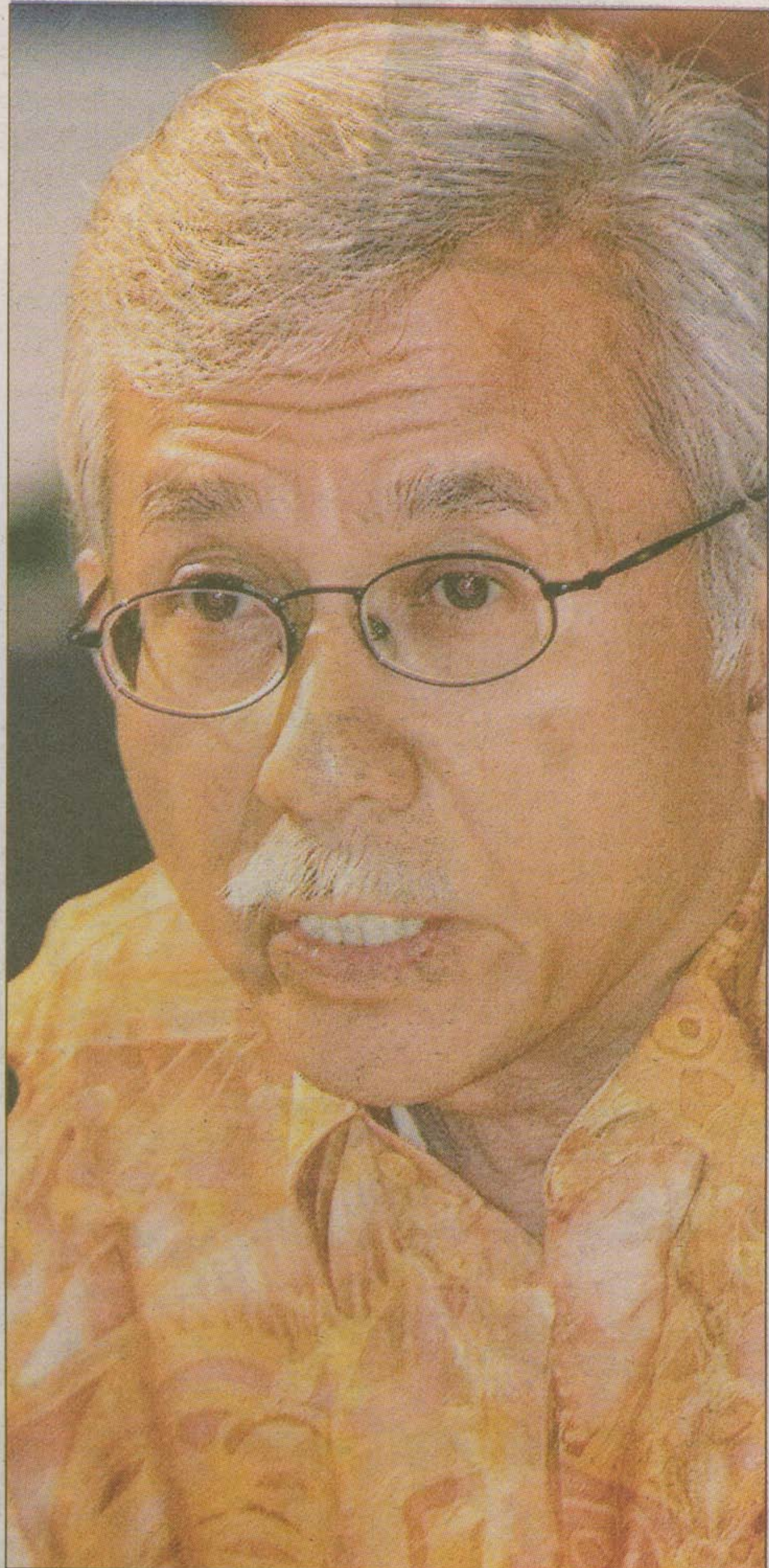
The second concession agreement between Metramac and DBKL was executed on Feb 13, 1992, 11 months after Daim had resigned as Finance Minister.

“My active role in the Metramac situation ended when I resigned as Minister of Finance on March 14, 1991,” said Daim, adding that he only came to know that the Government had asked Metramac to expand the scope of roads and interchanges in Kuala Lumpur and that on or about September 1991, toll collection resumed at substantially reduced rates.

“By September 1991, I was already at Harvard University to begin my tenure as a visiting scholar,” he said.

Daim admitted that Fawziah met him on a number of occasions to request his assistance in resolving the prolonged dispute between Fawziah Holdings and Metramac regarding the advertising rights under the concession. “I obliged as I have always tried to assist entrepreneurs where possible.”

Daim also pointed out that Fawziah Holdings, in its re-amended statement of claim dated March 7 1995, made no reference to him as a party nor stated that he had committed any



wrongs.

The notes of evidence from the trial of the case at the High Court and the written grounds of judgment also did not make any reference to him nor was he accused of having committed any wrongs, Daim said.

However, the Court of Appeal judgment contained specific accusations against him, leading him to seek legal advice over the matter.

“While I am not interested in trying to ascertain the Court of Appeal’s motive, if any, in making these uncalled-for strictures against me, I am in the process of seeking legal advice as to my next course of action,” he said.

Daim also contended that his first Press statement, issued through his lawyers on Jan 19, and his statement today were not in contempt of court.

“I am merely clarifying those parts of the judgment which, in my view, were based on facts which are wrong.

“I am asking fellow Malaysians to not fear the truth as only through the truth can justice prevail, and it is our duty to bring the truth to the attention of the court for judges to come to a fair and just decision.”

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