

19 SEP 1998

Anwar-Deny

ANWAR DENIES ENGAGING IN SODOMY, SAYS CHARGES FALSE

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 19 (Bernama) -- Former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today the confessions by two men that they had had sexual liaison with him are false and had been forced out of them.

Denying that he was involved in any of the activities that he is accused of, Anwar said the guilty pleas by the two men were made under "dire and cruel circumstances".

Anwar's adopted brother, Sukma Darmawan, 37, and his friend and former speechwriter, Dr Munawar A. Anees, 51, today pleaded guilty in the Sessions Court to committing acts of gross indecency by allowing themselves to be sodomised by Anwar.

Anwar repeated that there was a political conspiracy at the highest level to destroy his political career "by means of character assassination".

Speaking at a news conference at his house in Bukit Damansara late afternoon, hours after Sukma and Munawar appeared in court, Anwar challenged the authorities to also arrest and charge him in court.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also Minister of Home Affairs, should take immediate action to charge him so that he himself (Anwar) could fight to clear his name instead of the authorities intimidating the weak.

"My defenceless adopted brother and my friend have both been steamrolled into admissions of guilt without having had the benefit of consultation with counsel and family," he said.

"Is there a new trend developing in Malaysian law to get defenceless people to admit to despicable sexual practices in order to remove anyone who is seen as being an obstacle to schemes of evil doers in power?" he said.

Anwar again called for reforms in the criminal justice system and legal process, including the extensive police powers of investigation and detention.

The former deputy prime minister also criticised Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Noor whose attitude he said was clearly biased and partisan.

Anwar said the charges against Sukma and Munawar were only brought now because of the growing support for him (Anwar).

On reports that he planned to lead a rally at Dataran Merdeka at 4 pm tomorrow, at about the same time Queen Elizabeth II will be at prayers at a nearby church, Anwar said he had been invited by several organisations to be at the square.

"Do I need a permit to be at Dataran Merdeka?" he said.

-- BERNAMA

HS/AKT RM