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Ex-DPM speaks to reporters from the dock

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim told reporters today that he could not expect to have a fair trial if the Attorney-General continued to make statements about him.

Referring to Tan Sri Mohtar Abdullah's statement about further sexual misconduct charges to be brought against him after the present cases were over, Anwar said the Attorney-General should be professional.

Anwar was speaking from the dock to reporters during a short adjournment, an unusual privilege as accused persons are not usually allowed to give statements to the Press.

Turning to the local Press, he said the local media would not publish what he said but he could talk to the foreign Press which was also in the courtroom.

The hearing of four counts of corrupt practices against him began today. Dates for another six charges - one corrupt practice and five sodomy - have not been fixed but the Attorney-General said on Saturday they would run from December to June next year.

Speaking in his unique dramatic style, Anwar said it was unfair that the hearing dates were decided upon without referring to his lawyers. He also said the Attorney-General should make known the other charges against him.

Repeating various comments he had made in Press statements through his wife earlier, he said a bonus of at least RM700 should be paid to civil servants as the money would "only be siphoned off for cronies or children" of government leaders.

On the Renong restructuring deal, he denied ever giving verbal approval to Renong executive chairman Tan Sri Halim Saad. He said when Halim approached him, he advised him to go through the proper procedure.

"If (Prime Minister Datuk Seri) Dr Mahathir (Mohamad) said I gave approval, he was lying," he said.

Anwar also said it was disgraceful for the Dewan Rakyat to be told that the Prime Minister's official residence in Putrajaya cost only RM17 million. The "mansion", he said, was bigger than the King's palace and cost almost RM200 million.

He was then told by a policeman to stop his speech. He smiled, saying he was finished and was talking to his counsel. He then turned back to his lawyers.

Anwar was earlier given a white ribbon by his daughter, symbolising justice. He had just arrived in court again after the lunch break and was embracing his wife, children, mother and father.

His daughters also gave a handful of white ribbons to lawyers who pinned them on, and passed a few to the prosecution. Before leaving the court at the end of the day's proceedings, Anwar hugged his lawyers, wife and daughters. He jokingly pretended to hug Kamar Ainiyah Kamaruzzaman, a woman lawyer in the defence team, who batted him away.

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