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Court-Anwar (Family)

FAMILY SUPPORTED WRITING OF LETTER, SAYS UMMI HAFILDA

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 23 (Bernama) -- Ummi Hafilda Ali, the author of a letter accusing Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim of sexual misconduct, told the high Court here today that she had her family's support when she wrote the letter.

She said she discussed and showed the letter to her family members before sending it to the prime minister.

"In my letter to the prime minister I stated that all my five siblings agreed with the report then," she said.

Ummi Hafilda, 31, the sister of Anwar's former private secretary, Mohamed Azmin, said this at the trial of Anwar, 51, charged with four counts of corrupt practice by abusing his position to interfere in police investigations into allegations of sexual misconduct against him.

The former deputy prime minister is charged under section 2 (1) of the Emergency (Essential Powers) Ordinance 1970 which carries a maximum 14 years jail or RM20,000 fine, or both, on conviction.

The letter, accompanied by a sworn statement by Azizan Abu Bakar, former driver of Anwar's wife, accused Anwar of having an affair with Azmin's wife, Shamsidar Taharin, and of sodomising Azizan.

Ummi Hafilda said under re-examination by senior deputy public prosecutor Azahar Mohamed that another brother, Azman, also agreed with the letter because he had joined her to spy on Shamsidar, who was in a Daimler car owned by Datuk S. Nallakaruppan, at Tivolli Villa in Bangsar.

Defence counsel Gurbachan Singh objected on the ground that this was not raised in cross-examination but was overruled by Justice S. Augustine Paul.

Ummi Hafilda said the matter was mentioned in her letter to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Asked why she had said that her father later changed his stand, she said that when the letter was written, her father's stand was that anyone who committed a wrongdoing would bear the consequences and he had agreed that Shamsidar's conduct showed that she had a lover.

"After June 30, 1997, the relationship between Azmin and my other siblings was not good because he apparently tried to abet in things that were wrong," she said.

Earlier, under cross-examination by Gurbachan Singh, she agreed that she had never discussed the matter with Azmin and Shamsidar.

She said her relationship with Shamsidar was not so good after the spying incident at Tivoli Villa on June 30 last year.

She disagreed with counsel's suggestion that she did not give her sister-in-law a chance to clear her suspicion.

"During a meeting among us siblings at the house of my eldest sister, Norlia, Azmin tried to deny everything. Shamsidar was not present but we sought Azmin's views regarding the matter of his wife.

After that, she never met her sister-in-law because "Azmin had disowned us as his siblings", she said.

The prosecution objected several times to questions on the family issue saying that they had no relevance to the case but the defence submitted that they were relevant to show that Ummi Hafilda's family was not with her in the writing of the letter as she had claimed.

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Asked whether she had sent a letter to Azmin from London, Ummi Hafilda said she had done so because she sympathised with Azmin.

"I asked him to leave the problem to God because to me, God knows everything," she said, asking the judge to admonish counsel for shouting at her.

"Mr Gurbachan need not shout at me, this is Ramadan," she said, to laughter from the gallery and Paul asked counsel to stop shouting.

Ummi Hafilda disagreed with Gurbachan Singh's suggestion that she was the main reason the matter was brought into the open because it was discussed by her mother, sisters and brothers.

She said that at the meeting of the siblings in Azman's house, Azmin had sought their cooperation to change the contents of the letter saying: "You face the consequences. It's going to be a real battle if you don't want to cooperate with me. My boss is close to the IGP and my boss is close to the PM and I'm going to lodge a police report first thing tomorrow morning if you don't want to cooperate," .

-- BERNAMA

NHD JK