

04/09/1998

'I will fight to prove my innocence'

Rashid Yusof; Sa'odah Elias

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim vowed today that he would fight to prove his innocence, saying he had enough documented evidence, tapes and statutory declarations to back his defence.

The former Deputy Prime Minister told a Press conference there was no basis for the allegations that he was involved in sexual impropriety, endangering national security and corrupt practices.

Responding to his removal from the Cabinet yesterday and the allegations in the High Court today that he was involved in illicit sexual activities, Anwar said he was a victim of "scurrilous allegations".

About 200 members of the print and electronic media packed his house at Bukit Damansara for the Press conference.

Anwar was removed as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister yesterday. He said this came after an ultimatum by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that he (Anwar) either resign or face the sack with the possibility of charges being brought against him.

After consulting with Dr Wan Azizah, Anwar said he told Dr Mahathir that he was not prepared to submit to the conspiracy to undermine his position and to defeat him through nasty schemes.

He said: "I told him and I challenge him to use democratic means to unseat me and not to submit to pressure from some quarters close to him, influential or otherwise to continue this scheme."

Anwar said he had expected his removal for sometime already and in anticipation, even had arranged for his own house to be vacated three months ago. (He has been occupying the official residence in Jalan Damansara).

He also thanked the Prime Minister, saying that other than "my real father, I regard him in all sincerity as my own father ... although not all fathers treat their children fairly".

Anwar also alluded to his relationship with Datuk S. Nallakaruppan, the Magnum Corporation director of public affairs now being detained under the Internal Security Act; his commitment to reforms; and how he thought a red-carpet treatment accorded to him by US Defence Secretary William Cohen had triggered petty jealousies.

Anwar described Nallakaruppan as "an occasional tennis partner" who sometimes followed him on overseas trips together with "hundreds of others".

Anwar said he saw the allegations against him as the first case of moral conduct in the Government, claiming that this had never been an issue in the past.

"(What is) most unfortunate is the fabrication that even shocked me personally, because this is contrary to the notion of justice," he said.

"You can always frame them, you can always put prejudicial evidence against them, how is it only when the question or allegation that I am now preparing to challenge the president of the party that suddenly I have become a threat to the country, a foreign agent, the most corrupt person.

"If I had continued to show my total loyalty, none of this would arise."

He added that leaders of Umno, other component parties of the Barisan Nasional, DAP and Pas had telephoned him as friends and fellow party members.

He said he would continue efforts toward reform, a civil society, a freer Press and appealed to "friends in the party and in the Opposition

and rakyat in general" not to be taken in by the campaign against him.

Referring to his family, he said: "I am proud to have Azizah by me and the children. I am certainly sorry for them for having to deal with this, and I hope the Malaysian media which have been kind to me in the past will give me at least an opportunity to explain and defend my case."

On allegations that he had fathered a child with the wife of his aide Azmin Ali, Anwar claimed that two DNA tests, one of which was done abroad, had proven that Azmin and his wife were the biological parents of the child.

(END)