

24/12/1998

Letter written with family's support: Witness

UMMI Hafilda Ali, the author of a letter accusing Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim of sexual misconduct, told the High Court in Kuala Lumpur yesterday 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 from 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, Kuala Lumpur.

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 stated.

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.

Ummi Hafilda disagreed with Gurbachan'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."

Ummi Hafilda also testified that she was shocked to see the letter included in the book "50 Dalil Mengapa Anwar Tidak Boleh Jadi PM".

"I never gave my permission to the author, Khalid Jaffri, to include the letter in the book," she said.

She said she confronted Khalid "diplomatically" about this at their first meeting during a civil suit hearing concerning the book this year.

Until now, Khalid still refused to say how he got a copy of the letter, Ummi Hafilda said.

Khalid also did not reveal where he got a picture of her, Anwar and her sister-in-law Shamsidar Taharin that was included in the book.

That was not the picture she had given to the police last year, she said.

On the contract awarded by Pemadam to her advertising agency between 1992 and April 7 this year, Ummi Hafilda said the application was made through a committee chaired by Datin Paduka Rakibah Manap, who is a Selangor state executive member.

"I did not seek the assistance of (Pemadam president) Datuk Seri Megat Junid to get the contract," she said.

Asked why she did not mention her arrest to people like Special Functions Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin, she said it was because she had a phobia against politicians and the police after being arrested.

Earlier, Ummi Hafilda had denied a suggestion by the defence that she was fetched by Daim's driver to meet the minister together with Khalid and the book's publisher, Khairuddin Abu Hassan, at a club in Taman Melawati.

Justice Paul meanwhile barred the media from publishing the excerpts of a audio tape-recorded conversation which the Anwar's defence had presented to the court.

"I make a ruling to the press not to publish extracts of this conversation until tomorrow (today)," Paul said after a defence lawyer read out portions of the transcript of the audio tape.

Senior deputy public prosecutor Datuk Abdul Gani Patail applied to the court to bar publication of the excerpts of the transcript of the conversation until the judge makes a ruling whether to hear the audio tape today.

Gurbachan had surprised the court when at the end of the cross-examination of Ummi Hafilda, applied for the tape to be heard in court to determine if the woman's voice is that of Ummi Hafilda.

The defence claimed the tape contains a conversation between Ummi Hafilda and businessman Datuk Sng Chee Hua which, according to the defence, showed Ummi Hafilda's involvement in a conspiracy to end Anwar's political career.

Sng is also the vice-president of Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) and MP for Julau.

"I think that's fair," the judge said, before making the ruling and adjourned the trial for the day at 2.35pm.

Hearing continues today.

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