

30 JAN 1999

Court-Anwar

ANWAR IBRAHIM ORDERED TO ENTER DEFENCE

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 30 (Bernama) -- The High Court here today ordered former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to enter his defence on four charges of corrupt practice under section 2 (1) of the Emergency (Essential Powers) Ordinance No 22 of 1970.

Justice Datuk S. Augustine Paul said the prosecution had succeeded in making out a prima facie case against Anwar.

"In other words, the prosecution has established the ingredients of the offence under Section 2 (1) of the Emergency (Essential Powers) Ordinance No 22 of 1970.

"I, therefore, call upon the accused to enter defence on all four charges as amended," Paul said.

The defence will start on Feb 8.

The decision was delivered at 10.45am.

The amendments involved the second and fourth charges in the English version where the word "against" was changed to "from". In the first and third charges the words "which they obtained as directed in the form of a written statement dated Aug 18 1997" were added after the words Aug 5 1997.

Anwar, 51, faces four corruption charges of abusing his position to interfere with police investigations into allegations of sexual misconduct against him.

He faces a maximum jail term of 14 years or fine of RM20,000, or both, if convicted.

The decision to call for the defence of the former finance minister was made on the 50th day of the trial which began on Nov 2.

Anwar was removed from his government posts on Sept 2 last year and expelled from Umno by the party's supreme council the following day.

Anwar, clad in a white shirt and dark brown pants, turned and smiled at his family members in the packed courtroom after the judge delivered his decision.

Earlier, before the court resumed at 10.40am, Anwar who appeared cheerful and composed, said he did not expect to be acquitted.

Anwar, whose counsel had earlier indicated that they would be calling Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and three other Cabinet ministers as defence witnesses, will give his evidence under oath from the witness box.

The Cabinet ministers expected to be called are Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin, International and Trade Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob.

Anwar again pleaded not guilty after the amended charges were read out to him.

Before delivering his ruling, Paul told the court that he did not propose to give any reasons at this stage.

He said he made the decision after considering the evidence relevant to the charges and the submissions of counsel for both sides.

He said his decision was only confined to issues raised in the amended charges and not on the truth or falsity of the allegations of sodomy and sexual misconduct.

Paul later explained the three options to Anwar -- that he could remain silent, make a statement from the dock which could not be cross-examined by the defence, prosecution or the court but which would have a lower value

than a sworn testimony, or give evidence under oath from the witness box which could be cross-examined by all the three parties.

He said Anwar could discuss with his counsel before making a decision.

However, leading counsel Raja Aziz Addruse told the court that they had discussed with Anwar earlier and he would give his evidence under oath from the witness box.

-- BERNAMA