

10 NOV 1999

Court-Anwar (Postponed)

ANWAR'TRIAL POSTPONED, JUDGE UNWELL

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 10 (Bernama) -- The sodomy trial of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his adopted brother, Sukma Darmawan Sasmitaat Madja, was postponed to Friday by the High Court here today because Justice Datuk Arifin Jaka was not well.

High Court Deputy Registrar Rozilah Salleh, in announcing the postponement, said it was also to enable the defence to sort out documents for the trial.

Arifin heard Anwar's defence for 45 minutes before adjourning to enable Anwar's counsel to sort out the documents to be presented to the court.

However, he did not appear after the 30-minute break and Rozilah, who emerged from the judge's chamber with Anwar's counsel Karpal Singh and Pawancheek Marican and senior deputy public prosecutors Datuk Abdul Gani Patail and Datuk Azahar Mohamed, announced Friday for mention to determine when the trial would resume.

Rozilah said: "His Lordship is not very well and the defence counsel need time to sort out the documents."

Pawancheek told reporters later that the judge had to undergo a medical check-up at the hospital for a backache.

Anwar, 52, the former deputy prime minister, and Sukma, 38, are being jointly tried on separate charges of sodomising Azizan Abu Bakar, 39, former driver of Anwar's wife, at Sukma's apartment in Tivoli Villa, Bangsar, here, at 7.45 one night between January and March 1993.

Sukma, a businessman is also charged with abetting Anwar to sodomise Azizan at the same place and time.

Earlier, Anwar told the court that he received the letter, "Perihal Salah Laku Timbalan Perdana Menteri" (The Matter of the Deputy Prime Minister's Misconduct) dated Aug 5, 1997, said to have been written by Ummi Hafilda Ali, together with a sworn statement by Azizan from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in early August that year during a normal meeting at his office.

He said the prime minister informed him that Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob, who was then deputy home minister had given him the letter.

"The prime minister asked me to read the letter and destroy it," he said.

Dr Mahathir had raised the matter several times during their daily meetings and given him fatherly advice before their relationship changed, he said.

"He referred the matter...giving me fatherly advice to ignore it, dismissed it and said in politics we are bound to receive many more of such malicious, scandalous allegations,

"He even gave specific examples of poison pen letters written against him making wild allegations but he chose to ignore and dismiss them. He did not lodge any police report," Anwar said.

Anwar said he was disturbed with the allegations in the letter as it was the first time there were such allegations against him.

He told the prime minister that the letter was "fitnah" (defamatory) right from the very beginning when Dr Mahathir handed him the letter.

Anwar said he did not meet Ummi Hafilda, the sister of his former private secretary, Azmin, as the letter was not circulated to the public but he did show Azmin the letter since it involved his sister before asking him to destroy it.

Azmin was upset that his sister was prepared to write the letter to smear him, his wife and Anwar, he said.

He said that on Aug 11, 1997, the then Special Branch director, Datuk Said Awang, informed him of the circulation of a similar poison-pen letter purportedly written by Ummi Hafilda and another one entitled "Talqin Terbuka Untuk Anwar Ibrahim" (last Rites for Anwar Ibrahim).

When he mentioned that Tan Sri Rahim Noor had told him about the writer of the subsequent letter, Karpal Singh informed the court that the defence would probably call the former inspector-general of police.

At this juncture, Gani told the court that the evidence had been adduced earlier on Oct 25 and 26 when Anwar was questioned by his leading counsel Christopher Fernando.

-- BERNAMA

NHD JK