

28 JAN 1999

Court-Anwar (Decision)

COURT LIKELY TO DECIDE SATURDAY WHETHER TO CALL ANWAR TO ENTER DEFENCE

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 28 (Bernama) -- The High Court here is expected to give its decision this Saturday on whether to call Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to enter his defence on four corruption charges.

Justice Datuk S. Augustine Paul said he would give his decision on that day unless he needed further clarifications from the prosecution and the defence.

Paul said he needed time to look into the points of law raised by the defence, including whether former Special Branch director Datuk Mohamed Said Awang, and his deputy, Datuk Amir Junus, were accomplices.

He made the ruling after the defence team led by Raja Aziz Addruse and the prosecution team headed by senior deputy public prosecutor Datuk Abdul Gani Patail concluded their submissions today.

The judge also said that he would notify both parties if he could not arrive at a decision this Saturday.

Anwar, 51, the former deputy prime minister and former finance minister, faces four charges of committing corrupt practice by using his position to interfere in police investigations into allegations of sexual misconduct against him.

He is charged under Section 2 (1) of the Emergency (Essential Powers) Ordinance No 22 of 1970 which carries a maximum jail term of 14 years or fine of RM20,000, or both, on conviction.

Earlier, Paul adjourned the proceedings for five minutes before announcing his intention to deliver his decision on Saturday.

"The defence has raised issues that require me to give some thought. Certain points of law raised by the defence require a little bit more thought on my part," he said.

Raja Aziz started the submission for the defence on Monday followed by counsel Christopher Fernando, Gurbachan Singh and Haji Sulaiman Abdullah before Abdul Gani replied today, the 49th day of the trial.

The prosecution closed its case on Jan 5, after 39 days of hearing and 23 witnesses gave their evidence including Ummi Hafilda Ali and Azizan Abu Bakar.

Ummi Hafilda is the writer of the letter "Perihal Salah Laku Timbalan Perdana Menteri" (The Matter On The Misconduct Of The Deputy Prime Minister) and Azizan is the author of the sworn statement sent to the prime minister. Both documents contained allegations of Anwar's sexual misconduct.

The trial began on Nov 2.

Anwar's counsel had informed the court that they planned to call Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and three other cabinet ministers if the defence is called.

The cabinet ministers are Finance and Special Functions Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob.

-- BERNAMA

NHD JK