

21 OCT 1999

Mahathir-Karpal

DR MAHATHIR PREPARED TO ATTEND COURT

YAN, Oct 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he is prepared to be present at the High Court as a witness in the sodomy trial of his former deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"I will be there as a witness. It's nothing at all, only that Karpal Singh is trying to delay the trial," he said when speaking at a gathering of farmers at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Batu 17 in Sedaka, here.

The Kuala Lumpur High Court issued subpoenas on Monday against Dr Mahathir and Attorney-General Tan Sri Mohtar Abdullah to testify as defence witnesses in the trial.

Anwar is jointly tried with his adopted brother, Sukma Darmawan Sasmitaat Madja, with sodomising his wife's former driver, Azizan Abu Bakar.

Meanwhile, in the High Court today, Justice Datuk Arifin Jaka ordered Dr Mahathir to be present in court on Thursday.

The prime minister said that he was also not afraid to go to court following Karpal Singh's statement that that he had allegedly made a defamatory statement over Anwar's arsenic poisoning issue.

"I'm not afraid to go to court because my statement on the arsenic poisoning case has nothing to do with the ongoing sodomy trial.

"There is no case being tried in court over the arsenic poisoning. I dare challenge Karpal that whatever was alleged by me does not constitute contempt of court," he said.

Instead, he said, Karpal Singh, who is DAP Member of Parliament for Jelutong, was trying to delay Anwar's trial in the political interest of the opposition party.

Karpal Singh was also trying to protect his client from charges of alleging that he had been poisoned.

He said that the opposition party wanted the trial to go on until the coming general election because they wanted to raise the issue to criticise the government.

Dr Mahathir said there had never been in the court's history that a trial had dragged on for such a long time.

"With Anwar alleging that he had been poisoned with arsenic, we have to send him to hospital for examination, taking three weeks and causing the trial to be adjourned.

"We examined him out of sincerity, in hospital and finally, tests in three laboratories -- in Europe, Australia and in the country -- showed Anwar was not poisoned.

"This is a great lie. The purpose being, firstly, to delay the trial, secondly, to cause his supporters to riot, thirdly, so that the Commonwealth Law Conference will denounce the government, and fourthly, so that the Apec meeting in New Zealand will denounce the government," he said.

The prime minister said he was amazed that when tests revealed that Anwar was not poisoned, his supporters were upset instead of being thankful that their leader was not poisoned.

"But they were upset...this is strange," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the question was actually not the alleged poisoning but an attempt to destroy the country, undermine the government and cause riots.

"Anwar is my friend, I was the one who took him into Umno, promote him

up to the position of deputy prime minister...and on discovering that he was a homosexual, I cannot have such a person to succeed me," he said.

"We, as Muslims, cannot condone this and cannot accept sodomy...people indulging in it are not fit to become a small leader, what more a prime minister," he added.

-- BERNAMA

MZM/JM RM