

21 JUN 1999

Court-Anwar (Karpal)

KARPAL SINGH RAISES CONTEMPT ISSUE AGAIN

KUALA LUMPUR, June 21 (Bernama) -- The issue of whether Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had committed contempt of court was raised again at Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's sodomy trial in the High Court, here, today.

It was raised by Anwar's counsel, Karpal Singh, who drew the court's attention to Dr Mahathir's speech defending his right to speak about Anwar at the close of the Umno general assembly yesterday.

Karpal Singh told Justice Datuk Arifin Jaka that despite the defence having been allowed on Saturday to file an application to cite Dr Mahathir for contempt, the prime minister continued to talk about Anwar.

"That (filing of the application) is not part of these proceedings," Arifin said.

"But the prime minister has even pre-empted that one. He has said that he has not committed contempt of court," Karpal Singh argued.

"The prime minister is entitled to his opinion that he is not in contempt of court, just like when the accused (Anwar) says that he is not guilty of the charges," Mohtar said.

"Karpal, if you say it's contempt, take it up properly in an application. Everyone is entitled to say what he wants to say," the judge said.

Mohtar said Karpal Singh should not be ventilating on the issues again and again. He urged the court not to allow Karpal Singh to use it for "other collateral motives".

Karpal Singh, however, denied that the move was for political purposes.

"The question is whether the prime minister should influence or intimidate this court. It's purely legal, not political. He (the PM) brought it up, not me. It's a totally different forum to bring up (the case). It's not the same as the plea of not guilty made by the accused. There's no political element in bringing up this issue, otherwise I can take it up in Parliament," he said.

The matter was closed after Arifin ruled that the issue was a separate one and needed a separate application to be heard at a later date.

Anwar, 51, and his adopted brother, Sukma Darmawan Saasmitaat Madja, 38, are jointly tried on a charge of sodomising Azizan Abu Bakar at unit no. 10-7-2 Tivoli Villa, Jalan Medang Tanduk, Bangsar at about 7.45pm between January and March, 1993.

Sukma, a boutique owner, faces an additional charge of abetting Anwar in committing the offence at the same place, time and date.

Earlier, Karpal Singh discharged himself from acting for Sukma and joined the defence team led by Christopher Fernando.

Sukma will now be represented by Jagdeep Singh Deo and Gobind Singh Deo, both of whom are Karpal Singh's sons.

-- BERNAMA

RA JK