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Please leave us alone (HL)

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MALACCA, Tues. - The woman allegedly linked to former Malacca Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik, which eventually led to his resignation, has asked to be left alone.

At a Press conference today, Norhayati Md Yusof, 20, who was under-age at the time she was alleged to have been involved in the "affair", said she and her husband would like to "start anew" and did not want to be dragged into the limelight again.

Her case was mentioned in former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's trial last week when leading counsel for the defence, Christopher Fernando, questioned Anwar about Rahim's role in the alleged conspiracy against him.

Anwar had said "the Prime Minister came to my house. He informed me on the latest case ... on Rahim's involvement with an under-age girl." To another question, Anwar said the allegations related to having sex (statutory rape) with the girl, and corruption.

Norhayati said she and her husband were hurt by Anwar's testimony last week where he said "Rahim was involved with me when I was an under-age girl".

She had on Sept 2, 1998, made a statutory declaration before a Commissioner for Oaths in Malacca, stating that she never had sex with Rahim at any time.

At the Press conference today in Ayer Keroh, which was also attended by her husband Sulaiman Mohd Ali, 28, she claimed the allegations made when she was 15 were fabricated and that she was forced to lie about the affair to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the police in 1994.

She said she was not under pressure from any party to make the denial and that she had decided "to tell the truth" on the advice of her husband.

"He feels that only by telling the truth would people stop talking negative things about us. I hope with this, they will stop talking about me and my family."

Her allegations in 1994 forced Rahim to resign as Chief Minister and from all political posts. He was, however, subsequently cleared of the charges. Attorney-General Datuk Mohtar Abdullah had in November 1994 said there was insufficient evidence to charge Rahim in court.

Pleading that her past be not dragged up again, Norhayati said whatever she had told the Prime Minister with regard to the "affair" was not true.

Norhayati said with the disclosure, she was prepared to face the consequences, including action by the police for making a false statement.

She claimed she made the declaration because she felt guilty. She also spoke of how she was "kidnapped" from Malacca and held for two weeks in Kuala Lumpur and how she was taught and forced to lie to Dr Mahathir and the Bukit Aman police.

In her statutory declaration, she said she met Rahim only to seek financial assistance for her studies.

The declaration traced the events leading to the "frame-up". Norhayati said a teacher by the name of Zainal wanted to transfer her to Sekolah Putri Wilayah as she was always skipping classes. Two weeks before the transfer, Zainal took her to meet a friend.

"When we reached KL, I was brought to see one Dr Maamor at his clinic in Jalan Ampang. There, Zainal and Dr Maamor told me to lie about Rahim and say I had sex with him, but I refused."

When asked, she said she did not know the full names of Zainal or Dr Maamor.

Reading from the declaration, she said she was forced to stay in the clinic for two weeks where, she claimed, she was "brainwashed" and taught to fabricate a story of having had sex with Rahim.

"Cikgu Zainal took me to see the PM. There were four others (present) but I did not know them. Zainal told the PM that I had sex with Rahim, then he looked at me and I said, yes.

"PM remained quiet and just listened. After that, he asked the four persons to investigate the case."

Norhayati claimed she was later brought to Bukit Aman by Zainal. "He forced me to make a report. I was confined to Bukit Aman for 50 days."

While in Bukit Aman, Norhayati claimed that her father, grandmother Pendek Ahmad and her sister visited her. "I told them that I was forced to say that I had an affair with Tan Sri. However, my grandmother did not believe me."

To defend her, Pendek went on an all-out crusade alongside the DAP. This led to Kota Melaka Member of Parliament Lim Guan Eng serving a 18-month jail term for committing offences under the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 and the Sedition Act 1948.

Norhayati said after 50 days, she was sent to Taman Seri Puteri rehabilitation centre in Rembau, Negri Sembilan. She was released in 1996 and married Sulaiman last year.

When contacted, Rahim said the allegations were made up by "those people" who wanted to get rid of Dr Mahathir's supporters for their own political agenda.

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