

21 FEB 2000

Court-Anwar

ANWAR IBRAHIM SODOMY TRIAL POSTPONED ON DEFENCE REQUEST

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 21 (Bernama) -- The ongoing sodomy trial of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was today postponed to March 6 to give the defence time to prepare its arguments for the relevancy of calling Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to give evidence.

High Court Judge Datuk Arifin Jaka allowed the application of leading defence counsel Christopher Fernando to which Senior Deputy Public Prosecutor Datuk Abdul Gani Patail did not object.

Fernando said the defence needed time to prepare an affidavit to state the relevance of Dr Mahathir's testimony.

Counsel also told the court that the defence was also preoccupied with preparations for Anwar's appeal on his corruption case which is to be heard by the Appeals Court on Feb 28.

Dr Mahathir had been subpoenaed to testify in the Anwar sodomy trial but the court has yet to rule on the matter.

"To be fair to both parties, I will postpone the case to March 6," said Arifin.

He said the court would fix another date to hear the case if the appeal is not settled before March 6 and reminded both parties to inform the court on the matter.

Earlier, in his application Fernando told the court that the defence needed time to prepare the arguments for the appeal and asked for a postponement of the ongoing case until the appeal resolved.

Anwar, 52, and his adopted brother, Sukma Darmawan Sasmitaat Madja, 39, are separately charged with sodomising Azizan Abu Bakar, 39, at Sukma's apartment in Tivoli Villa, Bangsar here at 7.45pm, between January and March, 1993.

Sukma, a businessman, faces another charge of abetting Anwar in sodomising Azizan, the former driver of Anwar's wife, Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, at the same time and place.

Sukma had applied to the court in October last year to subpoena Dr Mahathir to appear as his witness in his personal capacity and on Feb 16, Anwar also applied to call the Prime Minister as his witness.

The Court of Appeal will hear Anwar's appeal against his conviction and six years' jail sentence imposed by the High Court for interfering in police investigations into allegations of sexual misconduct against him last April.

Anwar, also former finance minister, filed the petition of appeal on May 22 last year which contained 29 grounds.

On April 14, Justice Datuk S. Augustine Paul sentenced Anwar to six years' jail on each of four charges of corrupt practice and ordered the sentences to run concurrently commencing on that day.

Anwar was charged under Section 2 (2) of the Emergency (Essential) Powers Ordinance No. 22 of 1970 which carries a maximum sentence of 14 years jail or a fine of RM20,000 or both upon conviction.

-- BERNAMA

NHD RYN