

17 FEB 2000

Mahathir-testimony

MAHATHIR SAYS HE WILL TESTIFY IF REQUIRED BY COURT

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he would present himself at the sodomy trial of his former deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim if the court rules that it is relevant for him to testify.

"If it's relevant of course I will have to go. That is the law. There is nothing I can do about it," Dr Mahathir told reporters here when asked to comment on a defence request for his testimony in the trial.

Dr Mahathir was approached after opening the "Air Freight Asia 2000 Conference".

He expressed hope that his testimony would be relevant to the case as he would not like it to be just a kind of political stunt.

"I hope it is relevant to the case. If it is not relevant to the case and they just want to make a political show of it, I don't think it is being very fair."

The High Court is hearing today submissions from the prosecution and the defence on the relevancy of Dr Mahathir's testimony before deciding whether the prime minister should be called to the witness stand.

Justice Datuk Arifin Jaka decided to hear the submissions after the prosecution objected yesterday to the defence's move to call Dr Mahathir as witness, saying it would not be relevant to the case.

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 7.45 pm between January and March, 1993.

Anwar is serving a six-year jail sentence for corruption.

-- BERNAMA

HS RYN