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Sodomy trial of Anwar put off to March 6

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The High Court today postponed to March 6 the sodomy trial of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his adopted brother Sukma Darmawan Sasmitaat Madja.

Judge Datuk Arifin Jaka allowed a postponement following an application by Anwar's leading counsel Christopher Fernando.

The prosecution did not object.

Fernando said Anwar's appeal against his conviction and sentences for corrupt practice was to be heard next Monday.

He said the defence team needed time to prepare the submissions and asked for the present case to be adjourned until the appeal was disposed of.

(Anwar was sentenced to six years' jail on each of four counts of corrupt practice.

(The sentences are to run concurrently.

(High Court judge Datuk S. Augustine Paul convicted Anwar on April 15, last year.

(He found him guilty at the conclusion of a 78-day trial.

(Anwar was found guilty of directing former Special Branch director Datuk Mohd Said Awang and his deputy Datuk Amir Junus to get businesswoman Ummi Hafilda Ali and his (Anwar's) wife's former driver Azizan Abu Bakar to retract their allegations of sodomy and adultery against him.)

Fernando said another reason for the defence seeking a postponement was that it needed time to interview Anwar to prepare his affidavit (to show the relevance of the proposed evidence of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, whom the defence has subpoenaed).

Anwar and Sukma are charged with sodomising Azizan at 10-7-2, Tivoli Villa, Jalan Medang Tanduk, Bangsar, about 7.45pm between January and March 1993.

Sukma, a businessman, is also facing a second charge of abetting Anwar in sodomising Azizan, who was the driver to Anwar's wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

Meanwhile, the Court of Appeal will hear on March 2 an appeal by lawyer Zainur Zakaria who was sentenced to three months' jail by the High Court for contempt.

On Nov 30, 1998, High Court judge Datuk S. Augustine Paul found Zainur in contempt for filing an affidavit.

The affidavit filed was on behalf of Anwar, who was then on trial on four counts of corrupt practice.

Anwar had alleged in the affidavit that Senior Deputy Public Prosecutors Datuk Abdul Gani Patail and Datuk Azahar Mohamed had sought fabricated evidence against him (Anwar).