

Ex-Indonesian president believes Anwar is innocent

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Chan Kok Leong

Former Indonesian president Abdurrahman Wahid, popularly known as Gus Dur, today backed his friend Anwar Ibrahim's innocence in the latest sodomy claim during a visit to Kuala Lumpur.

MCPX

gus dur abdul rahman wahid pkr pc 180808 07Speaking to reporters at the PKR headquarters in Tropicana, Petaling Jaya, Gus Dur said that he trusts that Anwar did not commit sodomy on Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan, a former aide.

Anwar is facing a sodomy charge following claims by Mohd Saiful that he was sodomised by his former boss.

Gus Dur added that it was his personal belief that Anwar was innocent.

"I've known Anwar for more than 15 years and he is a man of integrity," said Gus Dur.

"It is impossible that he would have committed a crime such as sodomy.

"In fact, together with former US Supreme Court justice Sarah O'Connor, we've put our thoughts on Anwar's charge in the Financial Times," he added.

During the 40-minute press conference, he also said that he had advised Anwar against swearing upon the Quran to prove his innocence as it was unIslamic.

But the long-time president of Nahdlatul Ulama was careful to clarify that the views were his personal opinion and does not reflect the party's beliefs.

Nevertheless, he said that his opinion is widely shared by many Indonesians.

"In fact, when he was first charged with this crime 10 years ago (under former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad), none of us believed it either," said Gus Dur.

Undemocratic rulers of Malaysia

When asked if his strong backing of Anwar would affect Indonesia and Malaysia's ties, Gus Dur said it did not matter and he would stand by his statements.

gus dur abdul rahman wahid pkr pc 180808 02On what did other world leaders thought of Malaysia, Gus Dur said: "In the eyes of other world leaders the rulers of Malaysia are undemocratic. When you still have a law like the Internal Security Act (ISA), why ask about democracy?"

"Other leaders feel the same way as me in that it is impossible that Anwar would have committed such a crime. As such, these allegations have got to be false."

But he said that he was not in contact with other Southeast Asian leaders on the matter and it

was also not proper for them to comment on this issue.

Gus Dur was also asked if Malaysia would be seen as undemocratic if Anwar failed to win in Permatang Pauh, due to be held on Aug 26.

"That depends. If he lost as a result of manipulations in the election system then it is bad. If there has been no manipulation then there wouldn't be any problem."

"But what has happened here recently is that many of the ministers have gone around giving perks and that doesn't sound right," said Gus Dur.

What is Islam Hadhari?

In a huge blow towards Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's brand of civilisational Islam or Islam Hadhari, the learned scholar said there were gaps in Abdullah's concept.

"I want to know if it is Islam Hadhari and how can it be democratic when there are falsifications and manipulations," said Gus Dur.

The founder of National Awakening Party (PKB), who is 68 and almost blind from diabetes and other ailments, added that he would not be able to be in Permatang Pauh to help out in Anwar's by-election campaign.

But the first-ever elected president of Indonesia promised to return to Malaysia on polling day - Aug 26 - after the results are announced. Anwar is widely expected to win the by-election.

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