

Anwar's testimony from dock an act of protest, says PKR

Bernama

August 23, 2011

By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 23 — PKR said Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's unsworn statement from the dock yesterday to open his sodomy defence is an act of protest against "an unjust legal and political system."

Vice president N. Surendran said today that his party's de facto leader was following in the footsteps of former South African President Nelson Mandela, who also testified from the dock in the 1963 "Rivonia" trial that saw the statesman being given a life sentence for treason.

"By refusing to testify and daring them to do their worst, Anwar Ibrahim has put the legal and political establishment itself on trial. Through this single, public act of principled defiance he has demonstrated the shocking extent to which our justice system has been reduced to being a tool of those who are in power now," Surendran said in a statement today.

He said that Mandela's actions had "exposed the evils of the apartheid regime to the scrutiny of the world" and Anwar's actions has also "taken this judicial persecution and turned it into a weapon for the betterment of the nation."

Opposition Leader Anwar, in the dock for sodomy for the second time in his life, had charged Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday with following in his predecessor Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's footsteps to end his political career so the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) can remain in power.

He explained he was opting to testify from the dock, where the prosecution has no recourse under law to cross-examine his statement, because he had no confidence he would be tried fairly, and declared the entire trial to be "nothing but a conspiracy by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak to send me into political oblivion by attempting once again to put me behind bars."

"As I have said at the outset, this is not a criminal trial. It is a charade staged by the powers that be to put me out of action in order that they remain in power," he said, noting that his ex-boss and prime minister from 1981 to 2003, Dr Mahathir, had done the same thing in the 1998 Sodomy I trial.

The Permatang Pauh MP, who turned 64 just a few weeks ago, described Dr Mahathir as Machiavellian in turning to all the powers of the state to get him jailed 15 years for offences he insists he did not commit.

The Federal Court overturned Anwar's sodomy conviction in 2004, after finding contradictions in the prosecution's case.

This second sodomy allegation came soon after Pakatan Rakyat (PR) won five states and denied BN its customary two-thirds majority of Parliament in the landmark 2008 elections.

"Najib seems to think that by destroying my political future, it would also destroy the prospects of Pakatan Rakyat ever coming to power. Hence, nothing is spared to ensure that

I will be convicted in order that the Umno-led led Barisan government continues to rule," he said.

The former deputy prime minister said he believes he has been condemned to jail not for anything he has done but for "my political beliefs and convictions".

Anwar is charged with sodomising former aide Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan at a condominium in Bukit Damansara here between 3.10pm and 4.30pm on June 26.

He faces up to 20 years in jail if convicted under section 377B of the Penal Code, which would likely end his political career.

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