

Saiful's father joins PKR, defends sodomy conspiracy claims
Malaysian Insider
March 11, 2013
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PETALING JAYA, March 11 — Saiful Bukhari Azlan's father announced today he would be joining Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's PKR, just three days after he alleged "evil conspiracy" behind the party de facto leader's second sodomy charge and his subsequent apology to Anwar's family.

Azlan Mohd Lazim, however, maintained that his decision to join the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) anchor party had nothing to do with his accusation, saying he had been a PKR backer "as a grassroots supporter" since its formation in 1998.

He dismissed allegations that he was paid to make such claims and insisted that the revelation, made amid anticipation that national polls will be held within weeks, was the truth.

"I believe this is the right time to do it and support the movement for change," Azlan told a packed press conference at the party's headquarters here, flanked by PR's top leadership.

"I would like to tell my son that my love for him is undivided... just because I am joining PKR it does not mean my love for him will wither away."

The father of three also dismissed calls for him to back his claims by swearing on the Quran just as Saiful did in his sodomy allegation against Anwar.

Saiful had issued the same challenge to the PKR de facto leader who described it as a political gimmick to win Malay-Muslim support and which he subsequently refused to entertain.

"The issue of sumpah (swearing on the Quran), a lot of people have sworn... I am not afraid but I will not do so," Azlan said when pressed by reporters.

"If you can absolve crime through sumpah then you don't need the courts," said PKR secretary-general Datuk Saifudin Nasution, speaking at the same press conference.

In a heavily-guarded press conference on Friday, Azlan said the plot was planned by a special officer in the Prime Minister's Department and was engineered to tarnish Anwar's image with another sodomy charge, the opposition leader's second since he lost his post in government in 1998.

Rivals claimed the timing of his revelation was aimed at boosting PR's polls support although analysts polled by The Malaysian Insider said they believed Azlan's allegation will not impact Election 2013 much.

"I cannot stop what people want to say of their accusations. I accept the view of others openly," said Azlan on accusations that he was paid to make the conspiracy claims.

"I am doing this not to get public support. As his (Saiful) father, I am very much aware of what was going on behind the curtains," he added.

Azlan maintained that his decision to join PKR was a "professional" move.

On January 9 last year, the High Court acquitted and discharged Anwar of sodomising Saiful, 27, at a Desa Damansara condominium unit in Bukit Damansara here between 3.10pm and 4.30pm on June 26, 2008.

The veteran politician, who had earlier sued Saiful for wrongfully accusing him of sodomy, later withdrew the suit, saying his reputation had been vindicated by the acquittal.

The Attorney-General's Chambers has appealed the acquittal, however, and hearing in the Court of Appeal has been set for July 22.

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