

Saiful says father 'influenced' into apologising to Anwar
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By Md Izwan

PETALING JAYA, May 2 — In an anticipated move, Saiful Bukhari claimed his father Azlan Mohd Lazim was swayed into apologising to Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim after the latter retracted his apology and maintained that his son's sodomy complaint against the opposition leader was not a plot.

Saiful (picture) also claimed to have sworn on the Quran for the second time, this time in before the Kaabah in the Muslim holy land of Mecca, to back his allegation that he was sodomised by the PKR de facto leader.

The former aide Anwar said it was clear that his father was persuaded by PKR to make the public apology because the leader who arranged the closed-door press conference on March 8 was one of the party's top leaders, Datuk Johari Abdul.

"Is it not clear that the individual who arranged the closed-door press conference was PKR leader Datuk Johari.

"I do not know who instigated my father but it is obvious that the party leader is close to my father," Saiful told a press conference at The Club, in Bandar Utama here.

Azlan claimed yesterday that "certain quarters" had influenced him to apologise to Anwar and say it was a political conspiracy in a closed-door press conference last March 8.

"Today, I retract my apology to Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and stress that my son's sodomy case is true.

"It isn't a political conspiracy," he told a press conference at a hotel in Kajang, adding he will now quit PKR.

Azlan's retraction comes just four days before polling for the 13th general election, but the 60-year-old said the timing was a mere coincidence and that he had not been coerced by any party.

Saiful said he is relieved and grateful after his father had "repented" and maintained that his sodomy allegation against Anwar is the truth and not a political conspiracy.

"I am thankful and relieved..I'd like to stress again that the sodomy case between me and Anwar is the truth, it is not a conspiracy".

Saiful subsequently showed the media a video clip of him swearing on the Quran in Mecca in April last year after performing the Umrah.

"After I swore on the Quran before the Kaabah, I felt so relieved and all the pressure I felt before this was gone. I admit from the court's decision, I felt unsettled and disappointed... I then decided to seek for peace in Mecca," he said.

On March 8, Azlan had declared that the opposition leader's second sodomy charge was an "evil political conspiracy" planned by a special officer in the Prime Minister's Department involving Saiful that was engineered to tarnish Anwar's image.

At the heavily-guarded press conference called by PKR's Johari Abdul, Azlan had publicly apologised to Anwar and the latter's family over the incident, admitting the episode had put them through much pain and suffering.

Johari, a PKR supreme council member, told The Malaysian Insider today that Azlan may have come under pressure from Umno prompting the latter to retract his apology.

"Maybe he's under pressure, from Umno and also his family, that's why he made the decision to retract.

"His statement will not have any impact, the people can judge for themselves whether he speaks the truth or not," said Johari, playing down any potential backlash from Azlan's statement today.

"Such people can change their stand every time, it's up to him," added the Sungai Petani MP incumbent who will be defending his federal seat on Sunday.

Anwar declined comment when approached at an event in Selayang today.

The 65-year-old PKR advisor was acquitted of sodomising Mohd Saiful, then 27, by the High Court on January 9, 2012 and escaped spending potentially the next 20 years in jail, which would have killed off his political career and his dream of taking Putrajaya for good.

The veteran politician, who is defending his Permatang Pauh federal seat in the May 5 polls, had sued Mohd Saiful for wrongfully accusing him of sodomy, but later withdrew the suit, saying his reputation had been vindicated by the acquittal.

The public prosecutor has appealed against Anwar's acquittal and hearing has been set for July 22.

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