

Over 80 held at illegal gatherings

KUALA LUMPUR: More than 80 protesters were arrested throughout the country yesterday for taking part in illegal gatherings in support of sacked deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Police said in a statement that 75 protesters, including six civil servants, seven students and five foreigners were detained near the Dataran Merdeka here yesterday.

Earlier at 5pm, a large crowd had converged along Jalan Raja near Dataran Merdeka and began to shout "reformasi."

The crowd defied orders to leave and subsequently, members of the Federal

Reserve Unit moved in to disperse them.

In JOHOR BARU, 14 people, including 11 students and three women, were arrested for holding an illegal gathering at the Sultan Abu Bakar Mosque yesterday.

The group, including 10 Universiti Teknologi Malaysia students and one from the Johor Islamic Study Centre, had gathered with some 100 others at the mosque before noon.

Johor Baru Public Order and Internal Security officer Deputy Supt Tengku Asmara Tengku Burhanuddin detained them after they refused to disperse despite several warnings.

The crowd started to fill the mosque at about 9.30am and when their number had increased to about 100, police started to ask them to leave before making the arrests.

Although many abided by the police advice, the 10 students refused to leave the area and police had to detain them at the Central Police Station for questioning.

The three women, all in their 40s, tried to leave the mosque when police stopped and searched their car where pamphlets were recovered.

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500 hold illegal gathering at Kuantan state mosque

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Johor Baru MP Khaled Nordin said the gathering at the mosque was a waste of time for those who supported the *reformasi* movement because police would not allow any illegal gathering or rally.

He said those who supported Anwar should allow the law to take its course and let him answer all the allegations of sexual misconduct in court.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had assured them that Anwar would be brought to the court and his supporters who protested against his arrest would be ashamed when the truth prevailed and Anwar was found guilty.

In Kuantan, about 500 Anwar supporters held an illegal gathering in front of the state mosque in Jalan

Mahkota yesterday.

A group of about 60 people had first gathered at about 10am but the number increased to about 500 an hour later, with many holding banners and chanting "reformasi."

The group had also planned to perform special prayers (*sembahyang hajat*) on a field near the mosque but were stopped by the police.

Police led by Kuantan OCPD Asst Comm Sudin Ali arrived minutes later and advised them to disperse as they had no permit to hold the rally.

He also advised the supporters to hold the prayers in the mosque.

State police chief Deputy Comm Datuk Syed Abdul Rahman Syed Abdul Kadir, who arrived soon after the prayers ended, asked the supporters to leave peacefully.