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Anwar-games (news focus)

"ANWAR FATIGUE" MAY SET IN AS ATTENTION TURNS TO GAMES

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 10 (Bernama) -- For the past eight days, the nation's entire attention has been riveted on the sacking of Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The initial reaction had been one of shock, disbelief.

But as a clearer picture emerged following explanations by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and other leaders, there were more and more nods of approval for the Prime Minister's action.

"I had to sack him because of his low morals," Dr Mahathir told 3,500 Umno grassroots leaders on Tuesday.

"The police carried out their investigations. I did my own investigations and I'm convinced," said the Prime Minister, dismissing Anwar's insistence that his ouster was politically-motivated.

Anwar, meanwhile, has been holing out at his house making speeches before his supporters to protest his innocence. Lately however the speeches have focussed more on a call for a reform movement rather than countering the allegations against him, which range from sodomy to leaking state secrets.

As Anwar runs out of new things to say, indications are there will soon be "Anwar fatigue" among the public at large, according to some observers.

Attention is now turning to a more happy and exciting event -- the country's hosting of the 16th Commonwealth Games which begin tomorrow.

Given the economic gloom that had shrouded the country for the past year, the games are a welcome respite, said a businessman.

"Anwar has been sprinting while Dr Mahathir is pacing himself. I wouldn't be suprised if Anwar burns himself out first," said a politician.

Anwar meantime remains a free man despite repeatedly saying he was facing imminent arrest, possibly under the Internal Security Act (ISA).

His movements have not been restricted but he has confined himself to his house in Bukit Damansara, making statements virtually taunting the authorities to arrest him.

Streams of visitors have been coming to his house every night to listen to his "ceramah."

"I came here to see what is happening ... no, no I'm not a supporter (of Anwar)," said a 30-year-old bank clerk who was one of the many curious people gathered at the house, no. 8 Jalan Setiamurni 1, Bukit Damansara.

The nightly gatherings since his sacking appeared to be well-organised with flyers distributed all over the city inviting people to come to an "open house."

Anwar's diehard supporters continue to camp at the house. Some of his staunchest allies are those from the Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (Abim) which once he led. Others are from non-governmental organisations and some students.

Even Opposition leaders, including DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang, who had attacked Anwar in Parliament on many occasions, paid him a visit and has come out in support of the former Deputy Prime Minister.

Anwar may have secured the backing of the Opposition and the NGOs in his so-called "Reform Movement" but he has clearly failed to get the support from within Umno and other Barisan Nasional parties.

A big blow came Tuesday when 21 of the 25 Umno Youth executive councillors rejected his "reform movement" call.

Despite his failed attempt to get his movement off the ground, having

twice postponed his nation-wide road show, Anwar continues with his clarion call with shouts of "Reformasi" (Reformation) from his recorded speech reverberating through loud-speakers at his house.

Local and foreign reporters have also camped at Anwar's house, not so much to cover his now repetitive speeches but to be around so as not to miss his arrest should it happen.

The foreign media, who had good access to Anwar even before his sacking, have had a field day interviewing the ex-DPM.

CNBC, The Age, Reuters, AFP, Time -- Anwar has given interviews to them all.

As for the local media, Anwar has criticised them for allegedly being unfair to him, despite most newspapers carrying pictures and news reports on his nightly speeches and statements.

As the days passed, the question that is being asked by many remains: Did he or didn't he?

"I don't believe Dr Mahathir is fixing up Anwar to remove a challenge to his leadership. After all, it was he who brought Anwar into the government and groomed him to be his successor," said a government servant.

"Dr Mahathir must have solid evidence to take this action." said a driver.

An Anwar supporter meanwhile said he is convinced the charges against the former DPM are trumped up and part of a conspiracy to stop him from becoming PM.

"I can never believe Anwar had done what he is said to have done," said the supporter.

A company executive who said he was still unsure whether to believe or not to believe, commented: "Anwar has denied everything. But then, President Clinton also denied everything, only to confess seven months later that he did have sex with Monica Lewinsky."

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