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In one way or another, all are on trial

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WHEN Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is brought to court tomorrow to answer four charges of corrupt practices, he is not alone in facing the trial.

All of us, no matter how remotely connected we are to his case, are on trial in one way or another.

The Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, is on trial. Umno is on trial. The local and foreign media is on trial. The police are on trial. The judicial system is on trial.

While Anwar is on trial for the alleged offences, others are being judged for their part in the case.

Through it, the Prime Minister will be judged on his decision to drop Anwar from the Cabinet on the ground for which his former protegee will be tried.

Umno, in particular its supreme council, will be judged on its decision to sack Anwar from the party for a similar reason.

The media will be judged on its treatment of Anwar's sacking, his illegal assemblies and marches, his arrest under the Internal Security Act and not the least his famous black eye.

The police will be on trial for their investigations of Anwar's case and their treatment of him during his detention under the ISA, especially his black eye.

Anwar's black eye has long healed but our black eye remains until the truth is told and appropriate remedial action taken.

On trial are the reformasi protesters who have been taking to the streets since Anwar's sacking, agitating the police, promoting violence and taking grave chances with the lives of others.

The trial, though the same as others from the legal point of view, is an important one. Anwar is not an ordinary defendant and neither are the offences he is charged with.

While the law-abiding citizens are relieved that his trial will move from the streets to the courtroom, others seem not too keen to allow due process to take its course.

They are bent on keeping his defence in the streets and on the Internet as if they fear the truth.

For that reason alone, the trial is important. The trust and fate of so many are in the hands of so few. Their every word, decision and ruling will be closely scrutinised at home and abroad.

Yet if we believe in the rule of law, we have nothing to fear from the trial.

Instead we should accord the court and its learned officers the peace of mind and physical safety to carry out their tasks so that truth prevails.

Anwar's supporters, if they truly believe in him, should believe in his formidable defence team. In his team are some of the country's best legal minds.

The publicity and attention alone is sufficient to ensure a fair trial provided nobody bungles and law and order is maintained.