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Dr M: Follow judicial process

Lokman Mansor

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday that Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim should allow the judicial process to take its course and not continue to have thousands of supporters surrounding him.

"He (Anwar) has promised that if anyone tries to take him, he will be followed by a hundred others. It looks like he wants to have unrest. If he believes in the courts he should not have people around him to cause trouble," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister was asked to comment on Anwar's challenge to charge him in court after a press conference in Kuala Lumpur to announce the appointment of US-based Salomon Smith Barney as financial adviser to the Government.

"The police are still investigating. I am quite sure when they have sufficient evidence ... they will charge him in court. But I suspect that he (Anwar) will be waiting with thousands of people around him so as to create problems," Dr Mahathir said.

He said Anwar realises that by surrounding himself with supporters and university students the police cannot do anything without hurting these people.

"If these people get hurt, of course they will say 'Look, police brutality'," Dr Mahathir added.

Asked about foreign media reports claiming that Anwar is under virtual house arrest at his Bukit Damansara residence, Dr Mahathir said it is his own people who have placed him "under arrest".

"I can assure you if he wants to go walking around alone in any part of Malaysia, he can.

"But if he drags along a thousand people who are prepared to cause problems if legal action is taken against him, then he is already arrested by his own people. He has no freedom of his own. He has decided that his followers should surround him and keep him there (his house)," he added.

On Anwar's complaints that he no longer has access to the local media, Dr Mahathir said he believes Anwar has received more publicity than him, especially from the foreign media.

"I never get that. Recently, they wrote some nasty things about me which is not fair at all. I should also be surrounded by my followers because of this attack by the media," he said.

On Umno leaders visiting Anwar, Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said there is no ban on anyone going to see Anwar.

Asked about Anwar's nightly ceramahs at his residence, Dr Mahathir, who is also Home Minister, said: "This is a democratic country".

Bernama reports: The Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (Abim) yesterday requested the authorities to give Anwar the opportunity to defend himself through the process of the court from all the allegations made against him.

"As an Islamic movement, Abim upholds the principle of justice and truth and not any personality and that includes Anwar," Abim president Ahmad Azam Abdul Rahman said in a statement issued in Kuala Lumpur.

He noted that under the principles of the law a person was innocent until proved guilty.

Hence Abim was expanding its reform programme as an extension of its long standing Islamic activities in collaboration with other bodies to increase people's awareness of their rights, responsibilities and role in

building justice and democracy, he said.

He said by sharing the ideals of its struggle with other bodies, Abim was not defending the allegations against Anwar nor was it opposing the Government or other political organisations.

"Nevertheless the relevant bodies will continue to demand that full justice be given to Anwar to defend himself through the court process," he added.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian Silat Federation (Pesaka) yesterday called on its three million members from all the Malay silat disciplines in the country to be united and to stand behind Dr Mahathir.

Its president, Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib, said Pesaka will support all the decisions and actions by Dr Mahathir to maintain political stability and racial harmony and restore the economy.

The unanimous decision to support the national leadership was made at a special meeting of its supreme council in Shah Alam.

He said the people and Pesaka members should not be easily influenced by propaganda that could jeopardise racial unity and peace in the country.

Pesaka also urged parents to be wary of the activities of their children in tertiary institutions identified as targets of the nation's enemies to further their agendas to undermine peace in the country, he said in a statement.

Muhammad also said the students should not allow themselves to be used by irresponsible parties.

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