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US arrogance resurfaces in Soros

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THOSE seeking to oust Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad gained another foreign ally on Thursday in the person of currency trader George Soros.

Similarly those who are purportedly seeking justice for Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim can now count on Soros for support.

Speaking at the Johns Hopkins University in Washington, the trader called for the ouster of Dr Mahathir and the release of Anwar (from remand imprisonment).

According to a report by Reuters news agency, Soros said Malaysians should turn against Dr Mahathir because his policies were aimed at keeping him in office and benefiting his political allies.

"He is actually doing the right thing for himself because he is preserving himself in power, and he puts himself in a position where he can bail out his cronies who are in financial difficulties, including his son and so on," Soros was quoted as saying.

"So I think what needs to happen is he needs to be removed from power," Soros added, to light applause from a packed crowd.

Soros, chairman of Soros Fund Management and adviser to the Quantum Fund, also argued that Malaysia's exchange rate controls would deepen the country's financial crisis.

Speaking to reporters after the university speech, Soros said the (Malaysian) Government should free Anwar.

Asked by a reporter who should replace Dr Mahathir, Soros replied: "I hope that Anwar will be either let out of jail or if he's put in jail, the public opinion is going to turn against Mahathir."

Soros, considered one of the most influential Jewish businessmen in America, clashed frequently with Dr Mahathir about economic issues, especially about Malaysian demands for controls on capital movements.

His call for Dr Mahathir's ouster came three weeks after US Vice-President Al Gore endorsed the Kuala Lumpur street protesters as "the brave people of Malaysia" and drew a parallel between their demand and that of Indonesia's bloody reformasi and the Vietnamese Communist Party's Doi Moi.