

# Zooming in on poison issue

18 SEP 1999

THE two Malay dailies highlighted the alleged arsenic poisoning of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and the jailing of Far Eastern Economic Review journalist Murray Hiebert.

Berita Minggu front-paged a report quoting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as saying no politician had ever been killed in Malaysia over his political views and expressed surprise why the results of the alleged arsenic poisoning took so long to emerge.

*Utusan Malaysia* ran

Anwar's wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail's explanation — the local representative of the laboratory in Australia only received the report on Sept 8 and she received it the day after.

Berita Harian carried the Malaysian Medical Association's query on the use of the assumed name, Subramaniam, how the sample was brought out of prison and who sent the sample overseas.

Both dailies ran Dr Mahathir's criticism of US President Bill Clinton's

comment on the jailing of Hiebert for contempt of court.

Clinton said if a journalist was jailed for merely doing his job then it would curb freedom of speech and hamper democracy.

Dr Mahathir's sharp retort was Clinton was free to make his comment but "if he ever were to send in an army to free Hiebert then I would consider that an interference in a nation's affair."

"Since he did not react that way, he is free to voice his opinion."