

03 AUG 1999

Mahathir-Anwar

ANWAR TRYING TO PROLONG HIS TRIAL - MAHATHIR

IPOH, Aug 3 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he expects his former deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to lodge more police reports alleging all kinds of wrongdoings in a bid to prolong his trial.

"I believe that many more reports will be made by Datuk Seri Anwar and his friends. His strategy is to see that his trial continues until the general election is over," said Dr Mahathir.

Anwar, who was removed from the Cabinet in September last year, is currently being tried on a charge of sodomising his former family driver Azizan Abu Bakar.

Dr Mahathir said that by adopting the strategy, Anwar hoped that government leaders would not be able to say anything about him during the election (which must be held by June next year) as they would otherwise be held in contempt of court.

"We understand the strategy but we also know how to say something that will not result in us being cited for contempt.

"I know his strategy. He will say all sorts of things. He has said before 'I will fight' and this is his fight," Dr Mahathir told a press conference here at the end of a two-day visit to Perak.

The prime minister said it was for police to decide whether to investigate the report which was lodged on July 9.

"I don't know, it's up to police to carry out a probe in accordance with the usual process of the law," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who had earlier visited Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu and Pulau Pinang to explain to the people about current issues, was also asked to assess the people's acceptance of Anwar's removal from the Cabinet and Umno.

"The people now have a better understanding with regard to all sorts of issues raised by opposition parties including the issue of why Datuk Seri Anwar was sacked. They understand better and they accept (our explanation)," he said.

Dr Mahathir said initially people felt Anwar should not have been removed but now they understood the reasons and were more willing to support the government.

On alleged confidential documents posted on web sites set up by Anwar's friends, Dr Mahathir said:

"That is part of the things that the police will have to investigate. They will have to find out whether the documents are genuine or not, and how people got hold of the documents, how they could publish them."

He added: "Whereas we say that when a case has gone to court we cannot criticise, it seems the other side can produce all sorts of things.

"We avoid saying anything but you know other people, they have totally no respect for the court."

--BERNAMA

zks sk