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Analysis: Anwar-Accounts

ANWAR "MASTER ACCOUNTS" DISCLOSURE A BLOW TO OPPOSITION FRONT

By: Ali Mamat

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 29 (Bernama) -- With their internal squabbles continuing, the so-called Alternative Front, a loose political pact of four opposition parties, faces an uphill task garnering support to boost what little chance they have of winning the coming general election.

In the latest turn of events, the credibility of their shadow Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, has been dealt a severe dent if not a knock-out blow.

The front, which comprises PAS, DAP, KeAdilan and PRM, which has been leaning heavily on Anwar to win public support, may be losing their trump card following yesterday's expose by former Bank Negara Assistant Governor Datuk Abdul Murad Khalid.

Murad dropped a bombshell by making a statutory declaration that Anwar allegedly controlled 20 Master Accounts worth more than RM3 billion to be used to further his political ambition.

Murad claimed that among those who received payments from the accounts was a think tank in the United States headed by a former senior director of the National Security Council Douglas H. Paal. The payment of RM38 million was allegedly made to help promote Anwar's image in the United States and Europe.

He also claimed that Anwar as finance minister had used his position to arrange bank loans for several of his cronies, including RM20 million to someone who is now a KeAdilan leader. Also mentioned in Murad's statutory declaration is Dr Chandra Muzaffar, the KeAdilan deputy president, who today denied the allegations.

While reaction of the Alternative Front is being awaited, many quarters expressed shock and dismay over Murad's disclosure.

They believe Murad's allegations would definitely erode even further whatever little public confidence in Anwar's integrity.

Murad was known to be close to Anwar and as a senior Bank Negara officer, he knows what he's talking about, they said.

A comrade-at-arms of Anwar during their student days in the 1970s but now a vocal critic, Datuk Haji Ibrahim Ali, said the revelation gives the public an opportunity to now see Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's justification for sacking Anwar as deputy prime minister, finance minister and Umno deputy president.

"Now it is much easier for the people to see who Anwar really is and who is more transparent -- Anwar or Mahathir?" said Ibrahim, who is a Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

He said the use of an American agency by Anwar to promote his image was most inappropriate and could have jeopardised the nation's security, harmony and stability.

It also clearly proved that "Anwar is a leader who does not practise what he preaches."

Ibrahim however regretted that Murad's disclosure had come rather late because if it had been made earlier, "surely the anger and opposition among certain people against Dr Mahathir on the issue of Anwar's sacking would not have blown up."

But he was confident with the exposure, the trust in Anwar's credibility among a section of the population would diminish and the over-zealousness of the supporters of KeAdilan and other opposition parties would further erode.

The Malay Contractors Association of Malaysia secretary-general, Senator Rosli Mat Hassan, said those people who still supported Anwar and the opposition parties now find that they have been misled by the outward appearance of Anwar.

"In reality, he is a traitor to the race, more so to the Malay entrepreneurs who had looked up to him to help their cause."

"With this revelation, we now realise where part of the allocations of the Entrepreneurs Rehabilitation Fund (TPU) had gone to. The fund was created by the government to assist members of the contractors' association who were facing problems but it now appears that part of it had gone elsewhere," he added.

Rosli said if what Murad said was true, the RM20 million from the fund which went to one person could have actually helped 20 Malay entrepreneurs who were deserving.

He said Murad's disclosure was shocking because it showed how government machinery and senior officers such as a Bank Negara Assistant Governor could be used to further the political objectives of one person.

Rosli is certain that this latest development will open the eyes of the people and change drastically the perception of those who thought of the Alternative Front as a viable alternative government.

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