

Anwar supporters try to storm barricade
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Yet another scuffle broke out at the second day of Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim's Sodomy II appeal, as his supporters tried to storm through the barricade outside the Palace of Justice in Putrajaya.

The incident took place around 8.38am, shortly after some 500 supporters arrived outside the court complex after marching from the Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin Mosque.

As soon as the procession, led by PKR vice-president Tian Chua and PKR Youth chief Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad arrived outside the court house, some supporters shouted for "pushing through" the barricade, with a chaotic scene ensuing for some 10 minutes.

Tian Chua and Nik Nazmi were also spotted trying to push through the barricade with other supporters, but some 50 police officers quickly moved in to prevent a breach.

Makeshift stage attraction

Shortly after, Nik Nazmi urged supporters to calm down before passing through the barricade with Tian Chua to negotiate with the police.

They requested that the supporters be allowed to gather directly in front of the Palace of Justice, which the police refused to allow.

The crowd later calmed down as the PKR leaders began to make speeches from a truck that was used as a makeshift stage.

Yesterday, many of Anwar's supporters had gathered under a large canopy erected on Persiaran Perdana, especially when it started to rain late in the day. Today however, that area is cordoned off.

By mid day, Anwar's supporters outside the court complex had swelled to almost 1,000

Speaking to Malaysiakini later, Nik Nzmi said he did not intend to breach the barricade but was "trapped" in the middle when the crowd started pushing.

"Today, we are made to gather further from the court house compared to yesterday, so I requested permission from the police to gather in front of the Palace of Justice. But it was rejected," Nik Nazmi said.

Anwar was on March 7, sentenced to five years' jail after being found guilty of sodomising his former aide Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan in 2008.

His final appeal against the sentence began in the Federal Court and the hearing, slated for two days, may be extended.

Anwar, who is free on bail, maintains the charge against him is politically motivated.

Drumbeats and chants

Meanwhile, as the sun rose higher later in the morning, Anwar's supporters moved their stage to the area in front of the court shaded by trees.

Supporters gathered around the mobile stage, which is equipped with large loudspeakers, resulting in a livelier atmosphere.

This was in contrast with yesterday's scene when speeches were done on a handheld megaphone, barely audible more than 10 metres away. As a result, yesterday's crowd of 500 were scattered everywhere.

Adding to the atmosphere, a group of about six youths from Kelab Bangsar Utama lent their drumbeats to the chant of slogans.

"When it goes power-crazy, Umno will do anything.

"Let's go! Let's go! Young people. Go down to the streets!" went the lyrics of one of their songs.

One bystander who came to watch the spectacle, a 23-year old civil servant who declined to be named, opined that the protest shows that the democratic space in Malaysia has opened, compared with five years ago when he was a student activist.

Police presence is relatively light and the Federal Reserve Unit (FRU) appeared absent.

There were about 60 police personnel in front of the court just as yesterday, including members of the Light Strike Force.

'Majority just want to live another day'

Asked how his colleagues felt about the protest, the employee from the Ministry of Urban Well-being, Housing and Local Government said most of them were indifferent towards Anwar's case because it did not affect them.

"I would say that the majority of Malaysians just want to live another day. They don't care about democratic principles or having a different society or things like that.

"People here (at the rally) are in the minority when you look at Malaysian society as a whole. But of course, I hope that this will eventually become the majority," he told Malaysiakini.

Meanwhile, PKR member P Sarawanan said he drove three hours each way from his home in Bera, Pahang, and back yesterday to attend the rally, and also made the same trip today.

“We need to ensure that justice is given to Anwar today. The whole of Malaysia knows that this is a political conspiracy against him,” said the 37-year old, adding to have been following Anwar’s sodomy trials since the first one in 1998.

Another supporter, university student Nur Alya Syafiqah, said she is here to show solidarity for Anwar.

“I wanted to know about the issues that are happening in this country, and it is clearer if I come here with my friends to see it for myself,” Nur Alya added.

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