

Anwar: Government fiddling as crime rate soars
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Parti Keadilan Rakyat advisor Anwar Ibrahim has described the sniping between the internal security ministry and police headquarters Bukit Aman over conflicting crime statistics as a case of Nero fiddling while Rome burns.

"A cursory look at media reports would tell you that crime rates are on the rise," he remarked at his office in Petaling Jaya yesterday.

"So this argument is like two bystanders at the scene of a major accident, splitting hairs instead of getting down to brass tacks and helping the injured."

On April 8 Deputy Internal Security Minister Datuk Johari Baharum disclosed that the crime rate in the Sentul district of Kuala Lumpur had, for the first three months this year, soared by 90 percent and that snatch thefts had increased by an astonishing 693.5 percent.

The following day Federal CID chief Christopher Wan Soo Kee disputed the figures, saying the crime index in Sentul, viewed as a national bellwether of sorts, had increased by 10.1 percent while the rate for snatch thefts had declined by 36.6 percent.

Anwar said that, even if Wan's figures were deemed accurate, the overall picture is disquieting.

"It shows that the government-touted 'feel good' factor among the public is an illusion as the urban poor, lower middle class and middle class people of a representative district in the federal capital are vulnerable to society's criminal elements," he asserted.

The 'feel good factor' is Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's description of public ease over spin-offs from the government's policies, decisions and projects.

Merely a mirage

Scoffing at the 'feel good' factor as a mirage, Anwar said: "Whatever good feelings the people have had over the economy were throttled by the sharp increase in fuel prices last year - the public have been reeling under its effects.

"Now crime is on the rise as people's disposal incomes decline and as society's dregs resort to desperate means."

Anwar attributed the crime rate in Sentul to institutional decay and social malaise.

"It's two years since the release of the report of the Royal Commission on the Police Force. But what has become of its recommendations?"

He said bureaucratic inertia and tardiness in investigating corruption reports have engendered a sense of malaise.

"When people don't see those responsible for bad deeds held accountable, it feeds public

apathy and this emboldens criminal elements," he warned.

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