

Anwar urges Rudd to promote democracy on KL visit
Malaysiakini.com
Jul 9, 2008

Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim today urged Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to push the cause of democracy and rule of law during a visit to Malaysia tomorrow.
MCPX

Kevin Rudd and Anwar Ibrahim "I trust Rudd will convey to Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to respect the rule of law and stop intimidating opposition politicians," he told AFP.

Anwar is fighting sodomy accusations levelled by a former aide, 23-year-old Mohamad Saiful Bukhari Azlan, which he says have been fabricated by the government to prevent him from seizing power after landmark March elections.

"I am 60-years-old. I have a granddaughter. I hope they stop these allegations," he said.

"Abdullah needs to be told that he cannot use institutions like the police and the attorney-general's office and the judiciary to intimidate witnesses and fabricate evidence."

Mohamad Saiful has been under police protection since accusing Anwar of sodomising him - the same charge that saw the opposition leader jailed a decade ago.

Anwar not worried by Rudd's decision

Rudd arrives in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday on his first visit as prime minister.

News reports have said he had considered meeting with Anwar but decided against it because of the potential political backlash.

Former prime minister John Howard backed Anwar during his trial for sodomy and corruption in 1998 but it worsened a political rift between the two countries.

Former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who as leader sacked Anwar in 1998, announced Howard was not welcome for the 1998 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) summit in Malaysia.

Anwar said that he was not worried by Rudd's decision not to meet him.

"It is OK. I did not make a request to meet Rudd," he said.

'Maybe at another time'

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Rais Yatim said the itinerary for the Australian Prime Minister was simply too filled with official and governmental matters as to allow any time to meet Anwar.

"As such, there is no space for him, what more when the time (available) is too limited for him to meet individuals such as Anwar or other quarters such as NGOs and so forth," Rais said at a press conference in Parliament lobby today.

Perhaps, Rais added, there would be other occasions for Rudd to meet the former deputy prime minister-turned opposition leader such as in a personal capacity.

"But in this context, the visit is only one day. He will arrive in the morning, and he will depart the following evening, so there is no chance for other interactions," said Rais.

Rudd is scheduled to meet the King Mizan Zainal Abidin, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as well as attend to other programs arranged by the Australian High Commission, he added.

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