

Dr M's fight is personal, not reforms: Anwar

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KUALA LUMPUR: It would be wrong of the authorities to order the media to "black out" coverage of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's campaign against the government although his agenda was for personal interests and not reforms.

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who was sacked as the deputy prime minister, said although Mahathir would have acted that way as premier, the present government should not repeat something that was wrong.

Stressing that while he did not agree with what Mahathir was saying, Anwar said he respected his right to say it.

"The issues raised (by Mahathir) are not towards a reform agenda, but peculiar to his personal interest in seeing that some of the projects he had decided be carried through without question by the present administration," he said.

"To my mind, all projects that benefit the people must be supported. But projects, mega or

otherwise, that are dubious in nature or would not benefit the interest of the public, can be shelved or cancelled.

"I would strongly urge Malaysians not to be unduly distracted by this contentious battle but to focus our attention on the need for reform to strengthen the institution of civil society and governance and the fabric of our national economy.

"We lack the direction, we lack the necessary push, we do not seem to be an attractive destination for foreign investment. These are to my mind issues of priority."

On PAS leaders who seemed to be taken up with Mahathir, Anwar said the general consensus among the opposition is not to be involved in the controversy between Mahathir and Abdullah.

"They were curious. They would like to see how he lambasted Umno and Umno leaders and they rejoiced in that fact but I do not think it was necessary because there is a vast difference between our reform agenda and his criticisms."