

THE REACTION

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PM: We accept court's decision to free Anwar

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the Government recognised the court's decision to free Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and would expedite the process for the former deputy prime minister to get a passport to travel overseas for medical treatment.

"He is a free man now and he can go anywhere," Abdullah told reporters after launching ICT Week 2004 at Seri Kembangan, near here.

He was responding to questions on whether Anwar would be able to get his passport, which was impounded upon his conviction, and travel to Germany for medical treatment.

Abdullah, relaxed and bantering with journalists bombarding him with questions, said Anwar's release would not have any adverse impact on the country's political stability and security.

He was asked about the possibility of Parti Keadilan Rakyat supporters going on road shows to celebrate.

The Prime Minister said people were free to rejoice and do whatever they liked, but "the rule of the game is that they have to abide by the law".

Abdullah said the judiciary had remained independent and open and Anwar had been defended by a

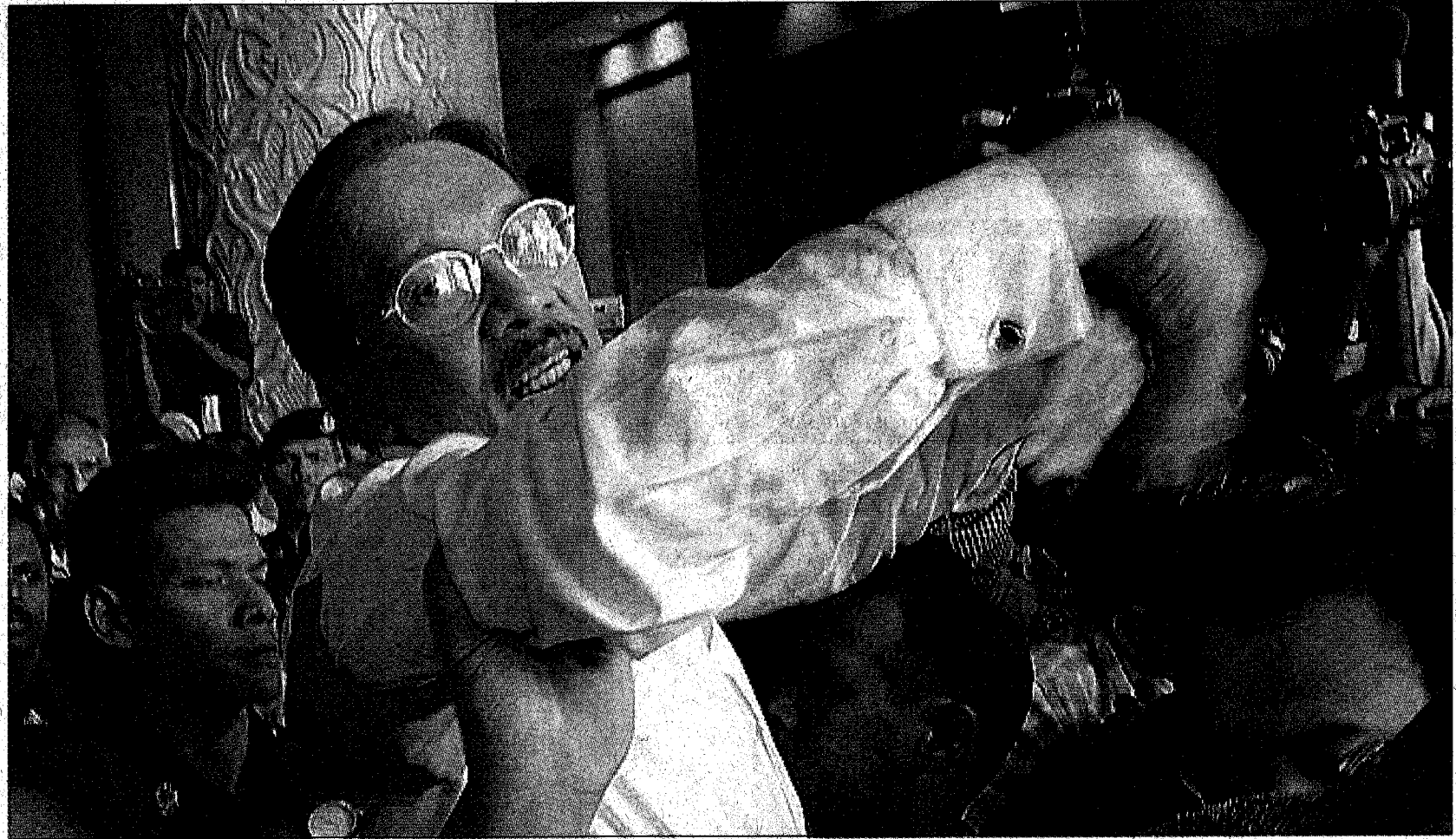
team of good lawyers.

Asked about a statement by Anwar's father, Datuk Ibrahim Abdul Rahman, that the Saudi Arabian Government had offered a private jet to fly Anwar to Germany, Abdullah said: "If the Saudi Government wanted to provide a jet, they would have informed the Government."

Asked if there was a possibility that Anwar might re-join Umno, Abdullah smiled and said it was a hypothetical question as he had been told by journalists that Anwar had, upon being freed, re-affirmed his commitment to the Opposition.

When journalists persisted in asking whether Anwar would be re-arrested and charged for other offences, he asked them in feigned surprise: "What charges? Do you know any? Tell us."

Asked about the 1.6 per cent rise of the Kuala Lumpur Composite Index attributed to Anwar's release by analysts and fund managers, Abdullah quipped that he was uncertain about that but knew for a fact that the second-quarter economic performance at eight per cent was better than the first quarter's 7.6 per cent. Furthermore, listed companies had also been announcing good corporate results and performance, he said. Abdullah was also asked whether he was happy that Anwar had paid tribute to him for his release. Smiling, Abdullah said he would be happy if people said nice things about him.



TUMULT: Anwar mobbed by his supporters after the court freed him yesterday.

International media show interest in verdict

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Media around the world showed interest yesterday in the Federal Court's decision to overturn Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's conviction on charges of sodomy.

United Kingdom's *The Guardian* chose to lead its international section with the news under the headline, "Malaysian ex-deputy PM freed from 'political' sentence".

The report quoted judge Datuk Ab-

dul Hamid Mohamad saying that the conviction was flawed because the chief prosecution witness had repeatedly changed the dates that he claimed he was allegedly sodomised.

It quoted Anwar as saying outside court that he "felt vindicated".

The *Financial Times* described the development as a "surprise decision".

Its Singapore correspondent, whose story was headlined

"Malaysia's former deputy PM freed", said the decision could boost the image of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as a political reformer.

Across the Causeway, the case topped the news at the *Straits Times* under the headline "Malaysian court acquits Anwar of sodomy".

The newspaper said Anwar was expected to travel to Germany for surgery on a back injury.

The report said Abdul Hamid took 90 minutes to read the verdict, and as it became apparent that Anwar would be freed, he exchanged excited glances with family members.

America's Cable News Network carried a report on its world broadcast.

The British Broadcasting Corporation said as news filtered do roar of approval went up.