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Mahathir-Trial

ANWAR TO BE CHARGED IF SUPPORTERS STOP RIOTING, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 25 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today his former deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, will be brought to court for trial if his followers stop rioting.

He said although Anwar was being detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA), he could still dissuade his supporters from rioting.

The Prime Minister was asked by reporters whether the delay in formally charging Anwar in court meant that the evidence against him for alleged sexual offences was not sufficient.

Riot police had to quell a few thousands of Anwar's supporters who turned unruly outside the courthouse here on Monday in anticipation of Anwar being produced in court to be formally charged for alleged sexual offences.

The Prime Minister, who had over the last few days revealed instances of Anwar's alleged sexual misconduct, including homosexual relations, said he believed that the majority of the people were convinced of Anwar's guilt. But he said Anwar, who was sacked on Sept 2 and detained on Sunday, appeared to have pre-empted by claiming that he would not have a fair trial.

"If he is found guilty he can tell everybody that he has not been given a fair trial," Dr Mahathir told reporters after launching the Malaysia Franchise Exhibition and Conference '98, here.

Asked about the illegal assembly by Anwar's supporters at the National Mosque after Friday prayers today, the second in a week, Dr Mahathir said he was sad that there were people who support those who "commit sin in the mosque".

"Actually they should not do that because it is sinful but they demonstrate in the mosque and this adds to the sin," he said.

Last Sunday Anwar, the former deputy prime minister and former finance minister, was arrested under the Internal Security Act (ISA) after leading an illegal rally which later erupted into rioting.

Asked why he did not pursue the matter (Anwar's alleged homosexual activities) when he was informed about it by the then Inspector-General of Police, Tun Haniff Omar, five years ago, Dr Mahathir said he could not believe that Anwar did such things.

"Now I have found evidence that I could not dispute," he said.

He said this in response to a question why the action against Anwar was only taken now, as this suggested that it was politically motivated.

Dr Mahathir also called Anwar "the biggest liar" for alleging that RM1 billion belonging to Umno had been transferred to Switzerland by Umno Treasurer Tun Daim Zainuddin in a commercial flight.

"Why should Daim carry a large amount of money using a commercial flight when he has his own jet plane?," he said in response to a question.

The question was in reference to Anwar's videotaped message aired on television by CNBC Asia in which he alleged that Daim had carried a large amount of money out of the country using commercial flight.

Dr Mahathir said: "Only gullible foreigners will believe it."

"Well, you think for yourself. If he wants to take a bagload of money to Switzerland, do you carry it and put it on the seat as alleged by Anwar? He (Anwar) told me that there was this huge parcel full of money and that the money was put next to him (Daim) and he told the pilot "I have a lot of money here" and the pilot later on reported to the central bank and the

central bank reported to Anwar and he reported to me.

"If you want to take a lot of money out of this country, people like Daim would know how easy it is to transfer of money just by writing on a few pieces of paper. If you want to carry RM1 billion, how big is that? How much is there? He has his own plane," he added.

Asked whether the central bank governor confirmed it (the transfer of money), Dr Mahathir said: "He (governor) has resigned, Anwar has been sacked, he doesn't want to be tried so he created a rumpus and he wanted to be arrested under the ISA so that now he can claim that he is detained under the ISA."

The prime minister said that even in Britain there is such a law called the Prevention of Terrorism Act which is similar to the ISA and it is a universal law in many countries.

Responding to a reporter's statement that in many countries, even if one is arrested under the act (prevention and terrorism act), he could still be seen, Dr Mahathir said: "Anwar is in Malaysia and just because you don't see him, it doesn't mean he has disappeared ...poof!"

To a question that Anwar's lawyers have no access to see him, Dr Mahathir said: "What do you mean? When the time comes for his lawyers to see him, they can talk to him. But his lawyers are not interested in talking to him, they are interested in making propaganda."

Asked whether he was surprised that, after many years, Anwar was still able to touch a raw nerve among a certain segment of the people and that despite what Dr Mahathir had said about Anwar, people still did not believe him (Dr Maathir) and took Anwar's side, Dr Mahathir said he was surprised at Anwar's involvement because he (Dr Mahathir) had been very naive.

"All this time he was my deputy, he was doing all this ... without my knowledge and he managed to hoodwink the nation, pretending to be religious and indulging in homosexual practices,"

"Now that he was discovered in time before he became the prime minister, I was grateful that I have the time to dismiss him before he becomes the prime minister," he said.

"If he becomes the prime minister, God help this country," he added.

To a question whether his (Dr Mahathir) statement that Anwar had committed the act would influence the court's decision on the former deputy prime minister, Dr Mahathir said Anwar himself had said that he was not guilty and that was already influencing the court.

Asked whether Anwar was not produced in court because he (Dr Mahathir) was not confident of the security and law and order in the federal capital, Dr Mahathir said that in the situation that Anwar was trying to create, people might be hurt and when people were hurt the foreign press would be happy and they would be taking pictures of blood. he said.

Asked how Anwar was to direct his supporters to stop rioting, Dr Mahathir said: "I dont know...mental telepathy."

He said Anwar had left enough messages and had distributed tape recorders and given interviews for the use of the foreign media.

Asked why Federal Reserve Unit personnel were sent into the National Mosque today to disperse the demonstrators, Dr Mahathir said: "How do you stop rioting inside the mosque when you cannot go into the mosque, can you do it by remote control?"

Asked about Britain's Foreign Minister Robin Cook's request that Anwar be given a fair trial and his lawyers have access to him, Dr Mahathir said: " I dont care what his views are, I dont know what his views are."

-- BERNAMA
ARA HAK Jk