

30/09/1998

`ISA used because ex-DPM inciting riots'

Ramlan Said; Alex Choong

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told the Dewan Rakyat today that the detention of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim under the Internal Security Act and the charges he faced in court were two different things.

This was because the ISA was used as Anwar had been inciting his supporters to riot, he said.

"We had advised him (not to incite riots) but he persisted. He was challenging the Government to take action against him, and when this happened, he would become a martyr", he said in response to repeated challenges from Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Tanjung) on why the ISA was used against Anwar.

Lim, who was debating amendments to the Securities Industry (Central Depositories) Act 1991, had touched on Anwar's arrest several times and claimed that an injustice had been done.

The exchange of words between the two, who were seated directly across each other in the Dewan, gave life to an otherwise technical discussion on the Bill.

Dr Mahathir spoke at length on the ISA, saying Anwar had repeatedly told the world that he expected to be arrested under the Act, and when this did not happen, he incited his supporters to create disturbances so that the Act would eventually be used against him.

"This is his pre-emptive strategy. The Opposition always calls for justice to be done ... we also want justice, so don't create riots (to prevent the court from hearing the charges)."

Responding to Lim's contention that Dr Mahathir had already stated publicly that Anwar was guilty of sexual misconduct although the matter had not been brought to court, thus a miscarriage of justice had been done, the Prime Minister said that was his personal opinion which had no legal status.

"My decision or opinion cannot land him in jail. But as PM, I have the right to say he is wrong and to sack him from the Government if I feel he is not suitable. This is our action ... the court will make its own decision."

Despite debating a financial Bill, Lim's speech was dominated by Anwar's removal from Cabinet and Umno, using it as an opportunity to call for transparency not only in financial matters but also in the judiciary and administration.

The House had earlier rejected his motion for a temporary adjournment to allow Anwar's sacking to be debated.

Lim's action in bringing up the issue during the debate did not escape the attention of several Barisan Nasional MPs who pointed out to Deputy Speaker Datuk Ong Tee Kiat that Lim had deviated from the main topic.

Ong agreed and warned Lim to concentrate on the Bill several times when the Opposition Leader continued to flout the rule.

(END)