

26 SEP 1998

Mahathir-Anwar

LET THE COURTS JUDGE ANWAR, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 26 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's supporters to let the courts judge the former deputy prime minister in peace and without any pressure.

"After that, if he is found not guilty, don't worry, support (Anwar) openly," the prime minister told a news conference for the local media at his official residence, Sri Perdana, here.

"I want to advise them to allow the courts to decide whether the charges against Anwar are true or not. Do not disrupt the process of the law in the country.

"If we disturb the judge, the judge will not be able to mete out justice," he said.

Anwar was dismissed from the government and Umno early this month for alleged sexual misconduct and arrested under the Internal Security Act last Sunday.

Dr Mahathir said police initially had no intention to detain Anwar under the ISA but had wanted to bring him to court early this week.

"Police initially planned to bring him to the ordinary court to be charged and then released pending trial.

"Unfortunately, he purposely held violent demonstrations and had to be detained under the ISA. With that, the police could not bring him to court this week," he said, referring to the sexual misconduct charges against Anwar.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Home Minister, said police also did not want to act during the recent Commonwealth Games here because they were busy with the games.

"Anwar knows this and purposely took the opportunity (to cause riots) so that he is not charged in court this week," he prime minister said.

He said Anwar had planned to cause disturbances like those in Indonesia so that his trial was postponed or not held at all.

"He (Anwar) feels that if there are riots like those in Indonesia, the government would not be able to administer properly...maybe the rioting would lead to looting and the government would have to step down or be toppled.

"If the government is toppled, as had happened to (Indonesia's) President Suharto, there will be not trial at all and he (Anwar) will escape just like that and his offences will not be exposed.

"This is what Anwar is doing to avoid being brought to trial," the prime minister said.

He said police had to be careful not to use force because if injuries were inflicted while trying to disperse the demonstrators, the foreign media would run down the country and Anwar would gain sympathy from the world.

"We are in a dilemma. We want to show that we are not a authoritarian government. Actually we have sufficient laws to curb rioting but we don't want to use them.

"That is why we allowed Anwar to have the rally in Kota Baharu, to show that we administer properly. But this appears to be ineffective and we have to find ways to control such things because we know that if the country is not peaceful, many parties want to capitalise on it." he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that he had not invited the foreign media to the news conference because their reports had never contained any truth.

"Today I met representatives attending the Young Presidents Organisation conference. They said that before coming here there were suggestions that the situation in Malaysia was bad and they had to cancel their trip.

"But they had a shock because it is peaceful here and there is no rioting," he said.

He said the foreign media had tried to run down Malaysia by portraying that there is no longer any democracy in the country and this might later be used by other countries as an issue to impose economic sanctions on Malaysia.

He said the foreign media had also played up the situation in Malaysia by giving the impression that there was rioting throughout the day until visitors were afraid to come to Kuala Lumpur.

They had also tried to garner world sympathy for Anwar by likening Anwar's wife, Azizah Wan Ismail, to Myanmar's opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Dr Mahathir said he was very sad that Anwar had performed very sinful acts as a Muslim.

"He had hoodwinked not only me but also the people all this while by portraying himself as religious man when he was doing acts which are viewed as despicable by Islam and the other communities."

Dr Mahathir regretted that there were Muslims who apparently held true to Islam but who were prepared to defend people like Anwar to the extent of lying in the mosque including claiming that Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak had resigned from his post.

"This is a lie. Datuk Najib has issued a statement to say that it is not true. This is a sacrilege to the mosque where we pray," he said.

-- BERNAMA

ZKS MOK AFY JK