

13 SEP 1999

Mahathir-Anwar

ANWAR'S ALLEGED ARSENIC POISONING A WELL-PLANNED PLOY, SAYS DR M

KUALA SELANGOR, Sept 13 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight his former deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim carefully planned to disclose his alleged arsenic poisoning during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders' Summit in Auckland to gain international attention.

He also chose to make the announcement when some 1,500 delegates of the international legal fraternity were in Malaysia to attend the 12th Commonwealth Law Conference.

He said the disclosure was made at an opportune time to arouse the anger of his supporters to riot and to hate the government.

His supporters were now painting a bad picture of the country to the foreigners, he said.

"They were now alleging that the government tried to poison their leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to arouse anger (among the people)," he said when opening the sports complex here.

Dr Mahathir said this was not the first time they had made wild allegations against the government as previously they had accused that the government would inject AIDS-causing HIV virus into Anwar's body while he was under police custody.

He said the Barisan Nasional government was not the type to poison its political enemies as "we are not scared of them."

He said Anwar was known to be a mastermind who liked to capitalise on demonstrations and riots to project himself for self interest.

Anwar knew how to exploit students and the people to gain political mileage and this was proven when he masterminded the demonstration staged by university students in Kuala Lumpur in 1974 when he (Dr Mahathir) was then the Education Minister.

The demonstration was prompted by news that a boy had died of hunger in Baling, Kedah, he said.

"Although the news was not true, the students still went ahead with the demonstration... it's clear that Anwar is the mastermind who is adept at using demonstrations to show off his credibility," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government had to detain him under the Internal Security Act (ISA) and the country was peaceful for about 25 years as he was subsequently in the government.

"Rioting and street demonstrations will not have occurred if Anwar was still in the government.

" When he is outside the government, he will be the mastermind for riots and accuse the BN of being unjust but when he was a minister in the government, he had never said the government was unfair," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Anwar did not protest when several people were arrested under the ISA in 1987 but he is now accusing the government of being unjust after being charged in court.

He said if the BN wished to show its capability to riot, the number of people present in this stadium tonight itself would suffice.

"But we do not resort to such actions because we value the peace... it is the arrogance of a small group of Anwar's supporters to assault a police officer on Saturday in the hope that they would not be identified," he said.

Dr Mahathir challenged the group whom he regarded as cowards to surrender and face the law if they were really brave.

" We want to congratulate the police because despite being provoked and ridiculed, they still discharged their duties without using force. Not that they cannot use force, they chose to carry out their duties orderly and peacefully," he said.

The opening ceremony was attended by about 25,000 people who were later entertained to songs and dances by popular artistes Ziana Zain and Senario Group.

-- BERNAMA

AZH/MK TS