

14 APR 1999

Anwar-Rioting

CALM IN FEDERAL CAPITAL AFTER RIOTING BY ANWAR SUPPORTERS

KUALA LUMPUR, April 14 (Bernama) -- The federal capital was again calm this evening after rioting occurred in several places this afternoon when supporters of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim clashed with the police following the former deputy prime minister's conviction and six-year imprisonment.

Rioting by about 2,500 supporters of the pro-reform movement which began at Jalan Medan Pasar at 1.25pm later spread to Jalan Tun Perak, Lebu Ampang, Jalan Masjid India, Lebu Pasar, Lebu Pudu and nearby Kota Raya Complex and Menara Maybank.

The group turned wild and hurled bricks and molotov bombs towards police personnel and broke several signboards and windscreens of vehicles including those belonging to the police, TV3, Bernama and members of the public parked within the area.

The rioting in the federal capital today resulted in several members of the police and the pro-reform supporters being injured.

Two police personnel, including a woman constable, were injured from glass splinters when rioters tried to confiscate a portrait of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad from a police beat base in Jalan Masjid India.

Konst (W) Verina Olin, 23, from Sabah and L/Kpl Mustafa Azam, in his 30's, suffered hand and face injuries. Verina is being treated at the Kuala Lumpur Hospital.

The two police personnel were on patrol duty at the police beat base when they were surrounded by a group of about 200 rioters who demanded that they handed over the portrait of the prime minister hanging in the beat base.

The group had earlier escaped from the police who were taking action to disperse the crowd at Jalan Tun Perak and made their way to Jalan Masjid India.

The rioters also burnt garbage bins along the roads involved and pulled down signboards put up along Jalan Masjid India.

Police had to fire tear gas and used water canons to disperse the rioters.

The situation was brought under control completely at about 6.30pm after 18 people including the vice president of the Keadilan party as well as president of the Gagasan Demokrasi Rakyat Tian Chua and former ISA detainee, Abdul Malek Hussain, were arrested.

Those detained were between the ages of 21 and 45.

Kuala Lumpur Police Chief Datuk Kamarudin Md Ali who confirmed the arrests said police had to take legal action against them to prevent any move that could jeopardise security.

Anwar's supporters who claimed to represent several political parties including Pas, DAP, PRM and Keadilan and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) began to gather outside the Masjid Jamek at 8am and then marched towards the courthouse nearby, an hour later.

The group broke up when the Federal Reserve Unit (FRU) sprayed water from water canons. They then headed towards Jalan Lebu Pasar before proceeding to the National Mosque and then marched back towards Jalan Tun Perak.

Several members of the group including Tian Chua, Malek and former student activist Hishamuddin Rais spoke at the gathering within the grounds of Masjid Jamek and the National Mosque.

"The group began to turn wild by throwing bricks and breaking the glass panes of the courthouse as well as the windscreens of vehicles," Kamarudin told reporters this evening.

He said the situation was now under control and there were no more gatherings or chaos reported after 6.30pm this evening.

Kamarudin also urged the people not to listen to rumours about the riots in the federal capital.

He said from police observation, the bulk of the demonstrators were students from institutions of higher learning.

"To supporters of the former DPM, I urge them to be calm over the court's decision today and if they have anything (dissatisfaction) it should be voiced through legal channels," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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