

18 JUL 2000

Court-Sedition

MY SPEECH WAS TO CALM THE PEOPLE, SAYS MARINA

BUTTERWORTH, July 18 (Bernama) -- Former Parti Keadilan Nasional (Keadilan) vice-president Marina Yusoff told the Sessions Court here today that she touched on the May 13 incident in her ceramah in response to a speech made by the prime minister in Melaka last year.

She said she felt that Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's speech, which among other things, reminded the people of the importance of choosing a responsible and strong government to ensure peace in the country and no chaos like the May 13 incident in 1969, could scare the people.

She touched on the May 13 issue to calm the situation and assure the people, especially the Chinese, that if the Alternative Front was elected, it would ensure that there was no chaos.

Marina, 58, a lawyer, said this when making her defence on a charge of uttering seditious words at a ceramah at the Chang Hua Kor Moral Uplifting Society Hall in Jalan Tanah Liat between 9.41pm and 10.08pm on Sept 29 last year.

The charge under section 4 (1) (b) of the Sedition Act 1948 carries a maximum RM5,000 fine or three years' jail, or both, on conviction.

Judge Siti Mariah Ahmad called for her defence today after ruling that the prosecution had made out a prima facie case against her.

Marina said she got to know about Dr Mahathir's speech, which was made on Aug 9 last year, from the Berita Harian newspaper dated Aug 10 and from feedback from her Chinese supporters.

In her speech, she gave an assurance to the Chinese that the Malays would look after the safety of the Chinese in the Malay areas and vice versa and that the same applied to the Indians, she said.

"We wanted to maintain peace and not cause riots," she when asked by her counsel Raja Aziz Addruse why she had uttered the alleged seditious words.

Marina said the words complained of were actually extracted from the mid portion of her speech and the prosecution did not state the preceding sentence in which she referred to Dr Mahathir's speech.

She said that as the general election was drawing near then, her whole ceramah that night was aimed at garnering the votes and confidence of the Chinese in the hall for the Alternative Front.

Marina, who joined Umno in 1960, also said that she had explained the cause of the May 13 incident because she knew about the incident and at that time she was attached to the Public Trustee Department in Kuala Lumpur.

She said that on that day several Umno Youth leaders had gone to her office and advised her to return home and not to come out because there would be trouble in the afternoon.

Asked how she knew that the incident was started by Umno, she said she had obtained confirmation from several people and researched the matter at the Public Records Office in London.

The hearing was then adjourned to tomorrow because the prosecution wanted to study the documents obtained from London.

-- BERNAMA

ZU JK