

Ex-ISA detainee backs Anwar over policy

Malaysiakini.com

Apr 27, 2007

Beh Lih Yi

Ex-deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim has received support from an 'unusual source' in the wake of criticisms over a contentious education policy he mooted while in government which subsequently led to the infamous Operasi Lalang in 1987.

Speaking at a ceramah in Selangor's Ijok last night, veteran opposition leader Lim Kit Siang openly backed Anwar, arguing that the former education minister should be credited for showing regret for what he had done.

Lim was one of the 119 politicians, social activists, unionists, Chinese educationists and religious missionaries rounded up under the massive crackdown. He was detained for one-and-a-half year without trial under the Internal Security Act.

The crackdown took place after tensions ran high in the country over the government's decision to send non-Mandarin speaking senior officers to Chinese primary schools in 1987. Anwar was then the education minister.

The BN has harped on the issue in their election campaign in Ijok - about 50km northwest of Kuala Lumpur - where the Chinese voters are accounted for about 20 percent out of the 12,272 voters.

'Bathe keris with Chinese blood'

At the ceramah held outside a Chinese restaurant last night, Lim said there are only a few people who are qualified to comment on the matter.

"I believe I am one of them because it resulted me to 'eat curry rice' (detained) for the second time. Do you think (BN Chinese-based parties) MCA or Gerakan are qualified? They are all accomplices in that!" said Lim in his trademark fiery oratorical style.

"Anwar has regretted for what he had done then. Shouldn't he be given credit for it?" he asked the 400-odd crowd in Mandarin, who responded him with a loud 'yes'.

"Has Umno, MCA or Gerakan regretted for what they did then? Who was the main culprit then? It was the Umno Youth chief then Najib Abdul Razak - the man who is leading the by-election campaign in Ijok now," the DAP supremo added.

"He (Najib) had made the most extreme statement where he wanted to bathe the keris (Malay dagger) with Chinese blood. Why nobody asks him to apologise? Where is MCA and Gerakan? Do you think they dare to ask Najib to apologise?" thundered Lim.

The crowd responded with shouts of 'they dare not!' Continuing, Lim told the crowd that Anwar was courageous enough to show regret, unlike Najib and the two BN Chinese-based parties.

In his speech which was delivered in a mix of Mandarin, Hokkien and Bahasa Malaysia, Lim also made reference to a statement made by ex-premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad who called

on the Ijok voters to send a 'signal' to the government.

"It is very rare for us to agree with Mahathir but this time, let us agree with Mahathir fully because once (PKR candidate) Khalid Ibrahim wins, it will send a signal to BN that the coalition has turned into 'Bribery National'," he said to another round of loud applause.

Criticise mainstream media

Speaking at the same ceramah later, Anwar - who is now advisor to PKR - reiterated that he believed all communities be treated equally regardless of their ethnicity.

"I support Malay, Chinese and Indians because no matter hua ren (Chinese), ma lai ren (Malay) or yin du ren (Indian), wo men dou shi yi jia ren (we are one family)," he cited the phrase which was made popular by him.

He also took offence at the mainstream media for what he has called as "malicious attempts" against the opposition in the election campaign.

Taking out a recording device from his pocket, he told the crowd: "This is from Al Jazeera and what I am saying now will be aired by Al Jazeera all over the world. It will be heard in Doha, Washington, Shanghai..."

He then turned to a cameraman from a foreign press and said: "Do you think this is (state-owned) RTM or TV3? No, the whole world know (what I am saying). Not TV3 or RTM."

He also brandished his hand-held personal digital assistant (PDA) to read out malaysiakini's news report on Mahathir urging voters to send a signal to the government (photo).

Others who spoke at the ceramah including DAP Sungai Pinang state assemblyperson Teng Chang Kim, ex-Lunas state assemblyperson Saifuddin Nasution Ismail and PKR information chief Tian Chua.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/66541>