

23/09/1998

Reasons for ex-DPM's arrest under ISA

The following is an edited version of Prime Minister and Umno President Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's Press conference at his office yesterday.

"Thank you for your presence this afternoon. Actually, I should have had this Press conference yesterday (Sept 21) after the meeting of the Supreme Council of Umno. But because of the Commonwealth Games closing ceremony I was not able to meet the Press.

"I want to inform you that the Supreme Council met yesterday to be briefed on what has happened in Kuala Lumpur, particularly with regard to the arrest of Datuk Seri Anwar (Ibrahim) and the reasons for the arrest.

"Of course this may not be believed by certain members of the Press who assume that I am a dictator who wants to arrest my potential rival. To those who believe that, it is really not worthwhile for me to explain because no matter what I say, that will still be the conclusion.

"It is a fact that he was allowed to break the law many times by holding illegal meetings and rallies. He was not arrested. But the climax came on Sunday when he instigated his followers to riot, to be violent and to attack certain places.

"It is clear that he was working up emotions in order to develop the situation that was found in Indonesia when these people rioted daily and tried to obstruct the normal life in the city. They hope that with that they can overthrow the Government, in particular overthrow me, which is not of great consequence anyway, since I am already 73 years old and I can't last forever.

"But the fact is that he urged them to do damage to the peace and order in the city and there is evidence also that he is trying to do the same in other parts of the country.

"As you know his people broke into the Umno building and destroyed pictures of past leaders in the museum. This is, of course, something that Umno members will not do. They may not like the leaders, but they are party members and will not do damage to what belongs to the party.

"But as you know, they broke in and tore the picture of past leaders of Umno. And then they marched towards my house. What their intentions were when they marched to my house was is something that I cannot be sure about, but they there were talks among them about burning the house or something like that.

"It is obvious that from merely talking to his followers, in his house as well as elsewhere, he has now decided to become a rabble-rouser rebel-rouser who wants to instigate violence.

"And, of course, he had to do it on Sunday, partly because of the confessions of these two persons with whom he had committed sodomy. Also because the Commonwealth Games was were on and the police were preoccupied with looking after the Commonwealth Games that was were going on.

"Also because he felt that the presence of a large number of foreign journalists would be good for his cause. Of course, his guess was right, this has now spread throughout the world, that I have now become a dictator. We have at least one Prime Minister who said that I have become a dictator ... an elected dictator of course.

"The whole idea is to damage the image of the country, create a loss of confidence, prevent Malaysia from being stable, etc.

"The police had to act. It is their intention, according to them, that they want to arrest him and charge him in the normal court of law. It was

not their intention to arrest him under the Internal Security Act. However, because of his incitement to violence, they had to take him in earlier than they proposed because they thought they would want to get more evidence against him.

"So they have now arrested him under the ISA, but I believe it is their intention to bring him before the courts and charge him in the normal manner. This is something that Anwar does not want. He does not want to face an open court and be tried. He wants to be arrested under the ISA so that he can accuse the Government of being oppressive, oppressive, dictatorial, etc.

"His own followers had made sure that the due process of law cannot be carried out by having demonstrations, especially in front of the courts of law. The fact that this kind of thing will get a lot of publicity elsewhere is also something he would like to see.

"Anwar's greatest fear is that he will be charged in court because then all the things that he had done will be revealed and all the witness witnesses will be able to appear to give evidence.

"These witnesses are different from others. They will have to give evidence which in a way will bring shame to themselves. Anwar's greatest hope is that they will not tell their stories, because to do so will bring shame to themselves. He was relying on that.

"But he did not expect that his own adopted brother and his friend will come out in the open and make this statement. They made this statement because I believe the police, who are Muslims, and those knowledgeable about Islam, pointed out to them that what they committed was a great sin and punishable in the after-life and that they need to repent and recant.

"But it would seem that they decided that they should come clean, even at the risk of being jailed for or abetting in an act of sodomy, even at the risk of their families being shamed by their confessions.

"What they said was the absolute truth. Anwar has not sworn in the mosque as he claimed. What he did was just to say "I swear." And that is not good enough.

"The fact is that the man had for years been masquerading as a religious person and yet had been committing these things, not today, not yesterday but for years.

"A man like that who appears to be religious, but in fact is not religious at all, is quite capable of swearing in a mosque, knowing full well that what he was swearing was not the absolute truth.

"There are other examples of people who will make speedy definitions in order to say that what they say is true, technically or even religiously. So I don't put much value to Anwar's swearing in the mosque.

"I am sorry to say this about this (former) deputy of mine, whom I had myself chosen to be my successor and groomed to succeed me.

"I had taken him in 1982, bring brought him up and helped him along until he overtook many people who are veterans in the party. He overtook them and went ahead of them and was all set to become the Prime Minister after me.

"And yet, when I discovered he was guilty of something that I cannot forgive, something that the Malaysian society cannot accept, whether Muslims or non-Muslims, action has to be taken.

"Action has to be taken against a person whom I had regarded as a friend, a colleague and to a certain extent as my protege. Because this man cannot be allowed to become a leader in a country like this.

"I conveyed this to the members of the supreme council and they agreed with the line of action that has been taken. Of course there were plans to disrupt Sukom. Last night they were there, but not in such great numbers."

(Below is the questions and answers session in full.)