

# Mahathir's lieutenants pass acid test

SOMETHING unusual happened in Malaysia last week. For five days, the country was in the throes of a crisis in national security, but its most recognisable face and voice for the past 19 years was missing. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad chose to remain in the background, allowing his two most-senior lieutenants — home minister Abdullah Badawi and defence minister Najib Tun Razak — to head the operations to force the surrender of heavily-armed members of a religious group.

His only clear instruction to both his men: avoid a bloodbath. It was a guideline he was to drum in many times over the telephone and at a meeting at his office on 5 July. It was a message embedded in the mind of the defence minister by the time he stood before the army and police top brass at 10 a.m. the next day and scrapped plans for an all-out assault against members of the Al-Ma'unah gang, holed up in the Perak jungle.

The temperature in the briefing room was perceptibly higher than in the previous four days, as two members of the gang who surrendered at dawn revealed that two hostages had been killed brutally. Army commanders were ready to go in. Najib said, "no". His aide told *The Straits Times*: "If an assault had been ordered, we would have been carrying body bags out of the hills. The soldiers will go back to the barracks but the government would have had a big headache." Najib was the man on the ground who ensured that the main consideration of the government to avoid a

bloodbath was always given primacy. "He is really surprised at the intensity of the attack by some quarters against him. He should be judged on the outcome of the crisis and not on the theft of weapons."

It was inevitable that the performances of the two men — slated to occupy Malaysia's top two positions when Mahathir retires — would be watched closely by the media, political analysts and opposition politicians. It was the first time that both were handling a full-blown crisis without the protective shield of the Prime Minister.

Judgment began on 2 July — the day 114 assault rifles, grenade launchers and ammunition were removed from two military camps in Perak even as army personnel watched. The defence minister got off to a poor start, in large part due to the weak comments he made at a press conference. He seemed unwilling to chastise military personnel for not following the standard operating procedure, appearing instead to be in awe of the men who pulled off the Hollywood-style raid.

Editorials in Malaysian newspapers, letters from several readers and Opposition politicians let him know what they thought of his comments. They noted that this was not the first theft of firearms from an army installation. Some wanted his resignation, others just wanted him to own up that there was a serious security breach in a key institution under his care. Democratic Action Party chairman Lim Kit Siang noted on Tuesday that it was scandalous that a full-scale inquiry was not underway 10 days after the heist, adding that the minis-

Two senior ministers in the Malaysian Prime Minister's cabinet were asked to quell the heist triggered by a religious extremist group on 2 July. **BRENDAN PEREIRA** looks at how they handled the crisis

ter's "tardiness and procrastination in setting up an inquiry board will only reignite public concern as to his suitability to continue as defence minister."

In contrast, Seri Abdullah earned praise for calling a spade a spade. He said that negligence by military personnel paved the way for the arms heist. No excuses were offered, just a spot-on diagnosis of the problem. He also exuded the air of a person in control, issuing orders that security be beefed up in key installations around the country and telling senior police officers on the ground to hold three press conferences a day for hordes of reporters who made Sauk their home during the standoff.

More importantly, he stayed away from the theatre of action, telling his aides that the "professionals" must be allowed to do their jobs without having to worry about babysitting visiting politicians.

But political analysts say that the public perception of the performances of the two ministers may only fuel coffeshop talk, and carry little political signifi-



cance. Professor Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, a noted political commentator, said: "Najib was a bit slow to understand the magnitude of the heist while Pak Lah had a better appreciation of the problem." But in the eyes of their boss, they will be judged on whether they achieved the goal of avoiding a bloodbath.

If there were a lot of bloodshed, it would not have mattered if you said the right things and looked the part."

History tends to support his analysis. In 1985, Mahathir was out of the country when police and Islamic fundamentalists clashed in the village of Memali in Kedah.

Eighteen were killed, including four police officers. The operation was headed by the then home minister Tan Sri

Musa Hitam. There remains a strong conviction that the use of force would not have been sanctioned by Mahathir if he had been in the country.

Today, PAS members who were killed in Memali are considered martyrs by the Islamic party and the incident continues to strike a raw nerve among conservative Muslims in the country.

Another bloodbath would have given PAS — much stronger and more popular today than 15 years ago — another platform to reach out to Malay voters. Mahathir and his government could not afford this scenario. That is why, in his eyes, both Najib and Abdullah passed the test.

— *The Straits Times* / *New Network*.

THE STATESMAN

17 JUL 2000

# Malaysia's submarine plan rouses Thai, Chinese suspicion

THE NATION  
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

BANGKOK, Aug. 1. — Malaysia's decision to buy a submarine has drawn puzzled criticism from Thailand and China, who say the move is a setback to the atmosphere of trust achieved at last week's Asean Regional Forum (ARF) and could set off a chain reaction in the region.

A Bangkok-based Chinese diplomat yesterday said Kuala Lumpur's decision could diminish confidence among Asia-Pacific neighbours.

The diplomat questioned whether Malaysia was reacting to Singapore, which recently bought four submarines from Sweden. In any case, its deci-

sion undermines the confidence achieved at the ARF meeting in Bangkok last week, the diplomat said.

China has a territorial dispute with Malaysia in the South China Sea, an issue that was discussed during the ARF security meeting. Malaysia's decision came amid negotiations between Asean and China over the drafting of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea. The accord is intended to reduce tension over territorial disputes.

The foreign minister, Mr Surin Pitsuwan, told reporters at last week's ARF meeting that Asean and China had agreed in principle to make a political, rather than a legal, commitment to such a code.

DPA reported yesterday that

the Malaysian defence minister, Mr Najib Razak, said the decision to buy the submarine was part of its plan to build a new naval base at Teiuk Sepanggar Bay in Sabah state, on the South China Sea.

Mr Razak said the move had not been triggered by Singapore's recent purchase of submarines.

But a senior Thai naval officer, who asked not to be named, said Malaysia's proposed purchase seemed to be in direct response to Singapore's purchase, as well as the island-state's acquisition of 27 off-shore patrol vessels. He said this had triggered what appeared to be a move to revive the process of military modernisation that had been stalled by the economic crisis.

THE STATESMAN

- 2 AUG 2001

# Malaysia's submarine plan rouses Thai, Chinese suspicion

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS  
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

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THE STATESMAN

- 2 AUG 2000

# Dangerous void-fillers

**W** Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad recently ridiculed the belief that a person can be cured of diseases by drinking a glass of water blessed by the ulamak (Islamic religious scholar), the eminent doctor believed he was stating an obvious fact. Mr Mahathir did not realise he would touch a raw nerve among a sizeable number of Muslims in the country. Some called him an enemy of Islam, others labelled him an infidel. Among his critics were civil servants, engineers, accountants, teachers and academics who were upset that he had dared to denigrate the healing power of Islamic religious scholars.

These were professionals, whose reaction to the siege in Sauk and the nation-wide crackdown on members of the Al-Ma'unah sect showed where their sympathies lie. Over the past two weeks, special prayers were held for sect members by staff of the Bank Negara and government agencies.

And in mosques in the mid-

dle-class suburb of Subang Jaya, pamphlets were distributed in support of the group that wanted to topple the government by force and set up an Islamic state.

Why do better-educated Malays join fringe groups that mix mainstream Islam with a brand of mysticism that borders on the ridiculous?

Over the past decade, about 50,000 Malay students have been educated locally and abroad in science and logic. Yet many of them place leaders of such fringe groups — numbering 53 according to the Islamic Affairs Department (Jakim) — on the same pedestal as Prophet Muhammad and believe that they are on the express lane to heaven.

The reasons probably lie in the social disruption that economic progress has created, says Tan Sri Musa Hitam, former Deputy Prime Minister and chairman of the Human Rights Commission, who believes Malay Malaysia may be witnessing a social phenomenon.

The country's spectacular growth has raised annual per capita income from RM 3,230 in 1980 to RM 13,300 in 1999. This has been accompanied by an unprecedented migration from rural to urban centres, and an erosion of values and an explosion of social ills.

"Some of them cannot face the realities of the new world and resort to going their own way, including turning to religious extremism," says Mr Tan. Abdul Hamid Othman, Minister in the Prime Minister's department who handles Islamic matters, says most of these professionals who seek religious solace fulfil basic religious requirements, such as praying five times a day and giving alms. They set aside extra time for reading the Quran and for attending religious talks. But a small group tries to outdo the rest on the scale of holiness.

They seek out teachers who claim to possess the secrets of life. Often, sessions with these "teachers" include *zikir* (religious chanting), which the followers believe would elevate them to a higher level of religious consciousness. "At this time, the teacher makes supernatural claims. He knows that his students, mostly without proper religious training, will accept any



Dr. Mahathir Mohamad touched a raw nerve when he dismissed the healing power of water blessed by an Islamic scholar — AP/PTI

proclamations from him. In the case of Al-Ma'unah, it is even worse because the group combines religion with martial arts. The leader even claims invincibility."

Making matters murkier is the different interpretations of Islam and the infusion of Sufism, or mysticism, which run counter to orthodox Islamic teachings. In extreme cases, the leaders of some deviant groups, although not the Al-Ma'unah sect in this respect, claim the right to have sex with the spouses of his followers.

Dr Hamid believes that such

Social disruptions that the economic crisis created in Malaysia, could be one reason why educated people have been joining fringe groups that mix mainstream Islam with a brand of mysticism that borders on the ridiculous, writes WAN HAMIDI HAMID

deviant interpretations of Islam must be checked to stem the proliferation of sects. "We must strive for the true teachings of Islam. That is why we embarked on the Islamisation process. We want Islam to spread gradually and harmoniously."

But some say it was the government's Islamisation process that provided fertile ground for the mushrooming of deviationist teachings.

The government's Islamisation process includes introduction of Islamic banking, finance and insurance services besides building

mosques and encouraging Muslims to participate in religious activities such as seminars, workshops and lectures.

An international Islamic University was also established. Introduced by Mr Mahathir in 1982, a year after taking office, the plan was to portray Malaysia as a model of a progressive Islamic nation.

It was also an attempt to steal a march on the fundamentalist Islamic party (PAS), which was hoping to ride the success of the Iranian revolution of 1979.

Twenty years on, the outward effect of the government's programme is there for all to see. The majority of Malay women wear head scarves, while more young Malay men spot goatees and skullcaps.

The change in religious outlook has also brought a more fundamental change on the ground — more people yearning for a nation governed by Islamic laws, not a country where Shariah and civil laws share equal billing.

The political turmoil set off by the sacking of Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim two years ago emboldened the conservative Muslim ground — to which many professionals belong to — to push for the establishment of an Islamic state.

In the eyes of these people

## RISE OF THE AL-MA'UNAH

A GROUP of 15 men in military uniform broke into an army post in Sungai Rui and the territorial army camp at Gerak in Perak on 2 July. They took off with about 100 assault rifles, machine guns, rocket-launchers and 5,000 bullets. They also took four hostages and set up camp at the foot of a hill in a village. On being surrounded by the army and the police, the group killed two non-Muslim hostages — a policeman and a soldier — after torturing them.

The lives of the two Muslim hostages, another policeman and a civilian, were spared but they were tortured.

After a five-day siege, the group surrendered. It was later learnt that the armed group is the Al-Ma'unah Inner Power Brotherhood, the official name for the Al-Ma'unah deviationist group.

Cult leader Mohamed Amin is a former army private who claims to be a silat (Malay martial arts) expert. He teaches mysticism and religion to about 2,000 members in Malaysia. The group also claims membership in Singapore, Brunei, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia.

According to the group's website, its aim is jihad and it calls on Muslims to join the group to make themselves invincible.

Al-Ma'unah is a registered association under Malaysia's Societies Act. State authorities later admitted approval was given because the group was taught to be a harmless silat group.

— The Straits Times/Asia News Network

abandoned the precepts of justice in its treatment of Mr Anwar.

Pushing it further, some groups like the Al-Ma'unah hold that the use of force is justified in bringing down an un-Islamic government.

Still, not everyone believes that it was the search for religious answers and recent political upheavals that sent Malays into the arms of Al-Ma'unah and other similar groups.

Prof Datuk Syed Hussein Alatas, senior fellow at

Malaysia, says that for generations, Malays have believed in the supernatural. Folklore is replete with heroes who used special powers to defeat more powerful enemies.

"If we believe a person can cast out an invisible being, it is easy for us to believe the person when he claims to possess invincibility.

After that, he will claim he is commanded by God to lead a movement, and by then, it will be easy for people to follow him."

Parents, school teachers and

## Islamic sects labelled deviationist

### 1. Teachings of Sulaiman (Noah's Ark)

Businessman Sulaiman Mohamad Said set up a company at Klang, Selangor, with a paid-up capital of 2.5 million ringgit in 1989. When his venture failed, he turned to religion to boost his fortunes.

The 500 followers who joined him — after paying 2,000 ringgit each — were promised a 13-room house and a Mercedes Benz 280s each if he could revive his business.

The group also erected a building in the shape of a ship with 52 rooms to prepare for a great flood in Klang, hence the name Noah's Ark.

Sulaiman also claimed that his assistant was a jinn, a supernatural being, with the name of Mr Programmer.

Religious authorities banned the

group in 1998 after that Sulaiman had other claims — that he had received Qura direct from God and would return to earth as Messiah.

### 2. Teachings of S Mohamad Al Mas (Tarikatul Islam)

At the height of its this group had 2,000 believed that only Muhammad's descendants including the Syed to spread Islam.

Syed Mohamad A of the founder, claimed prophet, contradicting teachings of Islam. Prophet Muhammad prophet.

He also claimed t

# Verdict in Anwar trial today

Kuala Lumpur, August 7

JAILED FORMER Malaysian Finance Minister Anwar Ibrahim will finally hear the verdict in his sex trial tomorrow, his lawyers said.

Anwar, who turns 53 on Thursday, faces up to 20 years in jail if found guilty but will be spared a whipping -- another penalty for sodomy conviction -- due to his age.

Whipping in prisons is limited to those aged 49 and below.

The verdict was originally due last Friday but High Court Judge Arifin Jaka postponed it at the eleventh hour.

The landmark trial, which lasted more than a year, has divided the Muslim country and shaken its political foundations.

The postponement on Friday came as police warned that they would sternly with planned demonstrations by supporters of Anwar, once prime minister-in-waiting.

Some 300 people defied the warning and protested on Friday outside the court house where the trial took place. Seven were arrested. Apart from some scuffles, the protest ended peacefully.

It was the first demonstration since mid-April, the first anniversary of Anwar's jailing for six years for abuse of power.

Anwar's ouster has galvanised the opposition which scored major gains in last November's general elections. The Parti Keadilan Nasional, led by his wife, said it would mark his birthday with a dinner tomorrow with other opposition parties.

*(Agencies)*

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 8 AUG 2001

**M**INUTES after the mutilated and decomposing bodies of two security personnel were recovered from the Al-Ma'unah gang hide-out in July, the authorities had this question to grapple with: Should they allow the press to take and publish photographs of the gruesome sights?

Out of respect for the families of Corporal Mathew Medan and Sergeant Sagadevan, the body bags were left alone. On hindsight, it may have been useful to have allowed Malaysian newspapers to shock their readers — if only to kill speculation that would mutate a few days later into the sinister theory that nobody lost their lives in the secondary jungle of Sauk.

Quite a few are swallowing this theory, judging by the response. Parti Islam Se Malaysia (Pas) firebrand Mohamad Sabu and other Opposition politicians receive every night when they attack the government's account of events surrounding the arms heist and the killing of two security personnel by the extremist religious group.

Forgotten in the burst of scepticism is the fact that a whole community in Sarawak observed a month-long mourning period for fallen commando Medan or that his slightly-built father thrust a tape recorder under Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's chin four Sundays ago and demanded an eye-for-an-eye retribution. But then, this is the new Malaysia — where photographs have to be released to prove that the Prime Minister performed the *umrah* in Mecca and where statements by government leaders are being greeted with a mix of scepticism and cynicism.

Last Monday, a group of Malay political science students at a local university ridiculed their lecturer as he tried to rationalise Umno Youth's action in linking to the streets to champion the cause of Malay rights. He was left stunned by the

# Fired by a 'wrongdoing'



The Anwar Ibrahim issue has created credibility problems for Mahathir Mohamad. The image of ruling Umno politicians as fat cats driven by personal interest also fed distrust. But if the Prime Minister were to step down, the Opposition would find another leader to train their guns on.

**BRENDAN PEREIRA reports**

the past two years.

The healthy circulation figures enjoyed by the daily, *Utusan Malaysia*, and its weekend version, *Mingguan Malaysia*, supports his observation that rural Malays are less cynical of the government.

In contrast, better-educated Malaysians are spoilt for choice. They can obtain their news from *Malaysiakini*, a web newspaper that enjoys 100,000 hits a day as it tries to straddle the middle ground; *Agenda Malaysia*, another online newspaper with a budding reputation for fair analysis and a slew of rumour-ridden websites.

Many get their daily diet of news about the country from foreign newspapers on the Internet, putting in doubt the government's ability to shape public opinion. Datuk Azim Zabidi, Umno Supreme Council member, said: "If you have to re-enact the Sauk incident, it tells you there is a credibility problem." He and others believe that the sacking of former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and the two-year gut-wrenching political turmoil that followed created a distrust for the Mahathir administration. There were rumblings of discontent before, over the country's privatisation programme and

murmurs over the erosion of confidence in the judiciary and other public institutions. But the Anwar episode produced a resurgent Opposition and a more inquiring population that altered the prerogatives and daily life of the government.

A yet-to-be-published survey of 2,100 people in the northern belt showed that the majority of Malays rejected the ruling United Malays National Organisation (Umno) because of the disgust at the manner Mr Anwar was treated by the government. Their anger was so great that they were prepared to vote for the Opposition.

During the party's recent registration exercise, some members returned blank registration forms. Others enclosed condoms and splattered faeces on the forms. This intensity of anger made Malays ready receptacles for the dirt that Mr Anwar dished out against his former colleagues. His "exposure" of corruption and cronyism in government and his allegations against the judiciary, mass media and police was designed to undo the social contract that existed between the government and the people.

Along the way, the government inadvertently aided his plan. Datuk Zakaria Ahmad, Dean of

the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at the National University of Malaysia, says: "The handling of the black-eye affair and the fact that the culprit has not been punished has created doubts about the whole system."

Former police chief Rahim Noor is appealing against a two-month jail term for his assault on Mr Anwar and has yet to spend a day in jail — a fact not lost on the university students and many civil servants. One lesson from the black-eye episode was: If there is any questionable activity, release the facts as early and as completely as possible. Do not allow inquiries by the Opposition to harden into permanent suspicion and warfare. The government is learning, slowly.

For some time now, there has been rumours that former Selangor Chief Minister, Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar, had fathered a child out of wedlock. The politician and his masters hoped that the problem would fade away. It did not. The Opposition raised the matter in the state assembly and he was forced to quit politics.

Just like the black-eye affair, the Opposition took credit for exposing the "wrongdoing" and the government earned brickbats. Umno politicians believe that a return to the party's ideals will help remove the layer of scepticism and cynicism that keeps it and a sizeable number of Malays on a collision course.

Datuk Mustapa Mohamad, the party's new information chief, said Umno was reaching out to the young, professionals, non-governmental organisations and religious leaders.

One of the young faces is that of Azalina Othman (36), a gregarious lawyer who was sur-

prisingly appointed to the party's highest decision-making body by Dr Mahathir.

She believes that though the Anwar issue created credibility problems for the party and government, the image of Umno politicians as fat cats driven only by personal interest also fed the distrust some people hold towards the establishment.

On weekends, she visits land-settlement schemes, talks to villagers and tries to get a handle on their problems. She believes party members have to do community work, just like in the old days. The party constitution is being amended to allow the setting up of Umno Puteri, a youth women's wing that will concentrate on community projects. "Only hard work and sincere action can change people's perception of the party," she says.

Some feel that the day Dr Mahathir steps down, the cynicism against the government will dissipate. Their reasoning: Much of the anger against the government is actually targeted at the Malaysian leader. If he

steps down as Umno president and Prime Minister, the target will be removed from the scene.

A neat and compact theory. Only one problem, though. Even the people who said they were upset with the manner in which the Prime Minister handled the sacking of Mr Anwar feel that his time is not up yet.

In the recently concluded survey of 2,100 respondents in the northern belt, many of Mr Mahathir's "critics" said his vision and drive were invaluable for the country.

Datuk Azim says: "If Dr Mahathir goes, don't think everything will return to normal. It won't. The Opposition will train their guns on the next leader and fire away. Umno still has to respond to the calls for change and engage our critics." The younger members of the party see no alternative. But can they chart the future? Or will they give way to the more experienced hands who continue to believe that time heals anger?

— *The Straits Times, Asia News Network*

## Malaysia for end to curbs on Iraq

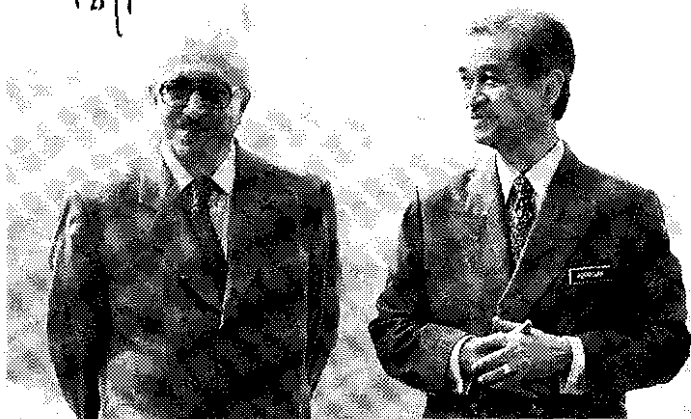
By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, JAN. 12. Malaysia today undertook a major diplomatic initiative in its capacity as a non-permanent member of the U.N. Security Council by pledging sustained support for Baghdad in its efforts to secure a comprehensive and permanent revocation of the global organisation's prolonged sanctions on Iraq. This was disclosed at the end of talks in Kuala Lumpur between the Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, and his Iraqi counterpart, Mr. Tariq Aziz.

The talks focussed on the latest Security Council resolution to form UNMOVIC (U.N. Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission), and the ways in which Malaysia could help Baghdad within the parameters of the world body's oil-for-food programme concerning Iraq.

According to the Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister, who stressed the importance of Iraq's cooperation for the success of UNMOVIC's mission, Baghdad is currently averse to certain aspects of the Commission's mandate perceived to be in conflict with Iraqi national interests. Mr. Aziz indicated, however, that Baghdad could still cooperate with UNMOVIC if Iraq's sovereignty and security were not likely to be compromised in the process.

Malaysia had joined a few permanent members of the U.N. Security Council in abstaining from



The Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Tariq Aziz (left), with his Malaysian counterpart, Mr. Abdullah Badawi, in Putrajaya, Malaysia, on Wednesday. — AP

voting last month, when the resolution on UNMOVIC was adopted in New York. Malaysia's support for Iraq, as indicated in today's talks, is in line with recent comments by the Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, that the U.N. had set a bad precedent by holding the people of Iraq virtually hostage in its bid to secure the fall of one person, namely Mr. Saddam Hussein.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian police today arrested and later released on bail two Opposition activists. According to the Malaysian State-run news agency, Ms. Marina Yusoff, Vice-President of Parti Keadilan Nasional (National Justice Party) surrendered at a police station in Kuala Lumpur, fac-

ing an arrest warrant issued against her for a speech in which she allegedly made seditious remarks.

The contentious remarks are said to pertain to the alleged role of the police during the riots of 1969, a very sensitive subject in Malaysian politics. According to a police official, Ms. Yusoff was later released on bail.

The National Justice Party is headed by Ms. Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, wife of the jailed political leader and former Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Anwar Ibrahim. The Party indicated that it remained steadfast in its resolve to fight for change, despite today's developments.

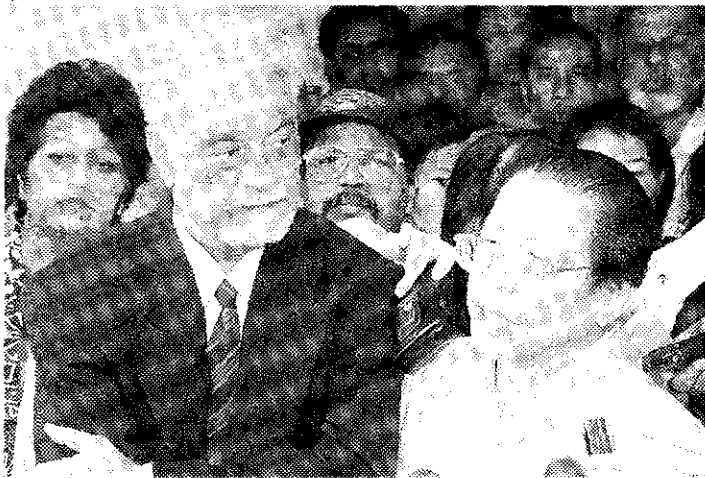
## Sedition charges against 2 Malaysian leaders

By P. S. Suryanarayana

**SINGAPORE, JAN. 14.** Three Malaysian Opposition leaders were today formally charged in court, two of them under the Sedition Act and the other under the Official Secrets Act. All the three pleaded not guilty and were granted bail.

The most prominent among them was Mr. Karpal Singh, Deputy Chairman of the Opposition Democratic Action Party and a veteran lawyer who has been serving as counsel for the deposed Deputy Prime Minister and imprisoned political leader, Mr. Anwar Ibrahim. Mr. Singh was charged in a sessions court in Kuala Lumpur on the count of having uttered alleged seditious remarks in court in September last year during the course of the ongoing trial of Mr. Anwar for alleged sodomy. The remarks related to the allegations about an arsenic poisoning of Mr. Anwar and a reference to people in high places in the overall context of an alleged political vendetta against the former Deputy Prime Minister.

The DAP leaders argued that this was the first time in the legal history of a Commonwealth State that a lawyer was being sought to be indicted for arguments in a court hearing.



**Mr. Karpal Singh (left), a long time critic of the Malaysian Prime Minister and defence attorney for the jailed leader, Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, looks on as the Democratic Action Party (DAP) president, Mr. Lim Kit Siang, addresses mediapersons after a trial in Kuala Lumpur on Friday.— AP**

The other leader to be charged today under the Sedition Act was Ms. Marina Yusoff, vice-president of the National Justice Party led by Mr. Anwar's wife on his behalf.

The charge related to a comment reported to have been made by her in regard to the racial relations in Malaysia.

Charged under the Official Secrets Act was Mr. Mohamed Ezam Mohamed Nor, youth wing chief of the National Justice Party.

The case filed against him before a sessions court in Petaling Jaya pertained to the allegation that he had purveyed classified documents pertaining to the Anti-Corruption Agency in regard to a Minister.

The editor and the printer of a newspaper belonging to the radical opposition Parti Islam Se Malaysia had also been charged earlier, and this prompted charges of a crackdown on political dissent.

THE HINDU  
15 JAN 2000



Rights group  
protests  
Malaysia arrests

NEW YORK, JAN. 22. In a letter to the Malaysian Prime Minister, Mr. Mahathir Mohamad, released on Thursday, Human Rights Watch expressed grave concern over the recent spate of arrests of prominent government critics in Malaysia, including attorneys, activists and opposition leaders.

In the letter, the rights group charged that the arrests had further eroded the credibility of Malaysia's legal system and said this latest crackdown bodes "ill for long-term stability in Malaysia."

The international human rights organisation protested against the arrests, which took place in the past week, of Mr. Karpal Singh, a well known defence lawyer, Mr. Mohamed Ezam Mohamed Nor, a leader of the National Justice Party founded by Mr. Anwar Ibrahim's wife, Dr. Wan Azizah, Mr. Marina Yusoff, vice-president of the National Justice Party, Mr. Zulkifli Suong, editor of the Islamic party newspaper *Harakah*, and Chia Lim Thye, owner of the paper's printing company.

THE HINDU  
23 JAN 2000

# Mahathir to testify in Anwar trial

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb. 17. — Malaysian Prime Minister, Mr Mahathir Mohammad, today said he was ready to testify in the sex trial of his ousted deputy, Anwar Ibrahim, even though he suspects it would be a "political stunt".

The Prime Minister's remarks to reporters came as High Court judge, Mr Ariffin Jaka, waited to hear arguments in a Kuala Lumpur courtroom on whether Mr Mahathir should be forced to take the witness stand.

"If it is relevant, I suppose I will have to go," Mr Mahathir Mohamad said, after inaugurating a meeting of freight operators. "That is the law and there is nothing I can do about it."

Mr Mahathir said the desire to drag him to court appeared to be driven more by politics than by law. "I don't know much about the case. But apparently there is some political nuance in the desire to put me on the stand."

THE STATESMAN  
18 FEB 2000

## 'Malaysia is entry point for illegal migrants'

KUALA LUMPUR: International crime syndicates are using Malaysia as a transit point to smuggle illegal migrants from third world countries to rich nations in the West and Japan, a news report said on Monday.

The multi-million dollar "human cargo" racket has seen hundreds of nationals from China, India, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Iran and African countries, detained since last year in Malaysia for using forged travel documents to enter western nations and Japan.

The rise in the trafficking of illegal migrants has alarmed Malaysian immigration authorities, who have begun working with their counterparts from the U.S., Australia, Canada and Britain to stem the flow, the *New Straits Times* daily reported. "What is taking place is merely the tip of the iceberg," a source told the daily.

In February alone, Malaysian immigration authorities detained 119 Iranians and Iraqi men, women and children, who were caught in speedboats heading for neighbouring Indonesia where they were believed trying to slip into Australia to seek "refugee" status. Malaysian authorities, however, had to release those detained because they claimed they were on "sight-seeing" boat tours as they

were arrested while still in Malaysian waters.

The daily cited the activities of one syndicate headed by an Iranian, who pretends to be a Greek businessman, and who entered Malaysia from Singapore several times using forged passports. The man had been operating in the region since 1995 and uses stolen western passports to smuggle middle-eastern illegals into developed countries where they sought "greener pastures".

Passengers heading for Australia were charged 7,000 dollars each, for European nations 4,000 dollars and for Japan, 12,000 dollars. As for Chinese nationals heading for the West, they would enter Malaysia on tourist visas, buy forged or stolen Malaysian passports and then try to slip into Europe via Moscow. Five Chinese nationals were denied entry into Moscow last year and deported to Malaysia where their passports were found to be fake.

Multi-racial Malaysia has a large ethnic Chinese and Indian population, and Malaysians have an easier time entering western countries as tourists than nationals of developing nations. U.S., Canada, Britain and Australia have begun stationing undercover agents at regional airports, to monitor the movement of the syndicates. (DPA)

THE TIMES OF INDIA  
29 FEB 2000

# Malaysian Chinese renew support to Govt.

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, FEB. 28. The Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), a key constituent of the ruling National Front, yesterday renewed its commitment to the "core" values of this long-ruling coalition such as "good government" and the "development" of all sections of the population such as the majority Malays and the minority Chinese as also ethnic Indians.

The renewal of this pledge, undertaken at the MCA's 51st anniversary celebrations in Kuala Lumpur, coincided with the latest political indications there that the Opposition Alternative Front, made up of four parties including the Malaysian-Chinese-dominated Democratic Action Party (DAP), might soon seek to firm up their recent electoral alliance within a longer-term framework.

The MCA, which often competes with the DAP for political space within the Malaysian Chinese community, played a critical role in shaping the success of the National Front in the parliamentary polls held last November. The MCA did so by outwitting the DAP at the hustings in a considerable manner. The DAP, which had joined the Muslim-fundamentalist PAS party, was widely seen to have lost electoral ground among the Malaysian Chinese precisely on account of that alliance.

However, the PAS is now trying to woo the Chinese and Indian communities, and this aspect has encouraged the DAP to consider formalising its ties with the radical Islamist party in a longer perspective. Another factor in the DAP's current calculation is that the PAS has recently eroded the vote bank of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), a key constituent of the governing Front, within the majority community.

Referring to the PAS's suspected new strategy of making itself acceptable to the country's minorities, especially the Chinese, the MCA president, Dr. Ling Liong Sik, questioned the political legitimacy of this perceived outpouring of goodwill from an extremist religious party towards the Chinese in particular.

The Alternative Front consists of the DAP and the PAS, besides the Keadilan Nasional headed by Ms. Wan Azizah Ismail, the wife of the imprisoned political leader, Mr. Anwar Ibrahim. Another constituent did not open account in the recent parliamentary poll. However, the four are at present exploring the possibility of cementing their ties so as to capitalise on the current discomfiture within the UMNO over the loss of political ground to the PAS in the

last poll. 110-17  
Noting these dynamics, Dr. Ling, who is also the Transport Minister in the present Cabinet headed by Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, told the MCA delegates that the association would remain steadfast in its support for the UMNO within the National Front. The MCA, he said, would not be just a fair-weather friend of the UMNO.

The MCA, whose genesis goes back to its establishment as a social welfare society in 1949, turned itself into a political party in October 1951. Beset by several crises over the years, the MCA is presently the most important component of the long-governing National Front, next only to the UMNO. It was against this background that Dr. Ling, speaking at the anniversary celebrations, said that the MCA would adhere to the "core" values of the National Front, such as democracy as also justice and economic fairness, as an article of faith and not a mere rhetorical slogan.

THE HINDU  
29 FEB 2000

# Hostages: Malaysia may take part in talks

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, MAY 2. Malaysia today indicated that it might explore the option of participating in negotiations to secure the release of 21 international hostages, including 10 of its nationals, from abductors with suspected links to the Abu Sayyaf group of Muslim separatists in southern Philippines.

The Malaysian Foreign Minister, Mr. Hamid Albar, said today that his country's Inspector-General of Police was now in the Philippines for talks with his counterpart to resolve the crisis that began more than a week ago when the 21 persons were seized at the diving resort of Sipadan off the Sabah coastline. Based on the feedback from the Malaysian security official, Mr. Hamid would decide whether to catalyse the sluggish parleys in conjunction with the Filipino authorities.

Malaysia's keenness to free the hostages through negotiations was expressed in the context of Manila's doubts over the fruitfulness of 'internationalising' the issue. Reports from southern



Hostages from the Malaysian diving resort of Sipadan were given medical treatment and provided with food, water and toiletries on Monday after a doctor was allowed into the Abu Sayyaf camp near Samak in southern Philippines. — AP

Philippines spoke of the occurrence of a clash, said to be a chance encounter, between the Filipino security forces and the hostage-takers at a point near the latter's suspected hideout.

On a separate front, the where-

abouts of a different group of all-Filipino hostages elsewhere in southern Philippines remained unclear until nightfall today. Fresh fighting between the Filipino troops and a separate group of Muslim militants, the Moro Is-

lamic Liberation Front, was also reported today.

It was against this increasingly volatile background that the Malaysian Foreign Minister called for negotiations. He noted that the Sipadan raiders holding international hostages had not so far made any specific demand, though speculation was rife about their wish-list.

## No role for OIC

Malaysia, which will host a ministerial meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference next month, said that neither the hostage crisis nor the guerilla rebellion by the Muslim separatists was a subject for intervention by the OIC.

The OIC's role "does not extend to kidnapping" for whatever purposes, the Malaysian Foreign Minister said. The OIC could play a role only in respect of a purely political issue and do so in the light of a precedent in regard to the Mindanao issue concerning the Philippines itself in the past, he pointed out.

THE HINDU

3 APR 2000

# Malaysia seeks direct role in hostage crisis

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, MAY 3. Malaysia today stepped up its diplomatic activism in an effort to secure the release of the 21 international hostages, including 10 Malaysians, from the hands of Muslim rebels of the Philippines, even as the Filipino Government maintained that it was in control of the crisis in spite of the move by the separatists to open more fronts of confrontation with Manila.

As the day was marked by claims and counter-claims about the death or killing of two of the hostages during or due to a Filipino military assault on a base of the abductors, a special envoy of the Malaysian Prime Minister outlined Kuala Lumpur's diplomatic strategy of holding direct talks on its own with the hostages if need be.

Even as there was until dusk today no authoritative confirmation of the claims by the kidnapers that two of their international captives had died last night, a main faction of the anti-Manila rebels, namely the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, was suspected to have taken 70 persons for possible deployment as a human shield in the context of the latest upsurge in its fighting with the Filipino military units.

At a different level, the military's hot pursuit of the rebels belonging to the mainstream segment of the 'Abu Sayyaf Group' did not lead to the release of a batch of all-Filipino hostages (not to be confused with the 21 international hostages including one national of the Philippines). The 'Abu Sayyaf Group' has been holding the Filipinos, numbering at least 27, for a number of weeks, and the military authorities were said to have located at least three of them. It was not clear whether the three, all children, were found abandoned by the

110-17 militants or whether they were actually rescued. 9/5

As for the international hostages, who were kidnapped at Sipadan off the Malaysian coast over 10 days ago, the Estrada administration in Manila did not rule out a decisive commando-style military operation to rescue them. But Manila appeared to regard these three instances of hostage-taking as localised crises not necessitating a nationwide alert at this stage.

The demands by the hostage-takers were also not clearly identified by the Filipino authorities, given their deep suspicions of the propaganda content of the militant actions by the Muslim rebels. But the bottomline in the demands by the rebels was a call for an end to the Filipino military's offensive against them at this stage. The centrepiece of the earlier unheeded demands by the rebels was that the U.S. should set free three prisoners, including the one convicted for 'masterminding' the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York.

It was against this background that the Malaysian Prime Minister's special envoy, Mr. Amin Mulia, travelled to Manila to meet the Filipino President, Mr. Joseph Estrada, and the Defence Secretary, Mr. Orlando Mercado, to discuss ways of cooperation between the two countries to free the international hostages. As part of a cooperative rescue mission, Malaysia would be willing to deal directly with the Sipadan raiders, if necessary, Mr. Amin told reporters in outlining his diplomatic mandate for discussions with the Philippines.

This aspect acquired additional importance in the context of pleas by the families of the international hostages, including Malaysians, for a non-military solution to the crisis.

25 APR 2000

4 APR 2000

## Malaysia enunciates new defence policy

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, APRIL 11. Malaysia is seeking to fashion a new concept of ensuring national security by striking a posture that would not threaten other States even while deterring potential aggressors, according to the country's Defence Minister, Mr. Najib Tun Razak.

The Minister has been quoted as saying to a defence publication that Malaysia's policy was now being reviewed to meet the new challenges of the post-Cold War era.

Force modernisation would be a component of the new policy aimed at keeping pace with the post-Cold War changes and meeting them, he said.

On a different front, Malaysia urged the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), at its latest ministerial meeting in Cartagena to intensify its efforts in seeking the elimination of all nuclear weapons across the globe.

This was necessitated by, among other reasons, the emergence of new players in this sphere, it was said. Malaysia also spoke against the unbridled proliferation and excessive accumulation of small arms.

THE HINDU

12 APR 2000

Anwar accuses  
sodomy trial  
judge of bias



Anwar Ibrahim

ASSOCIATED PRESS

*Call 1370*  
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*Malaysia*  
KUALA LUMPUR, April 12. — Jumping up from his chair in the dock, jailed politician Anwar Ibrahim today shrieked at the High Court judge conducting his sensational sex trial and accused him of being biased.

The outburst by the 53-year-old former deputy prime minister came after Judge Ariffin Jaka repeatedly interrupted his lawyer who was arguing that Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad be ordered to testify in the sodomy trial.

"I want to know whether you have made a decision or not," Mr Anwar shouted. Then the judge flew into a rage. "You sit down, or I'll charge you with contempt."

Mr Anwar refused to obey. "You charge me with whatever you want. If you have got instructions, say you have got instructions," he shouted, insinuating that Malaysian authorities may have already given orders to the judge not to call Dr Mahathir as a witness.

Mr Anwar's lawyer defended his client's outburst in court. "Injustice is a painful thing," Mr Karpal told Judge Ariffin.

He said it should have been clear to the court long ago that Dr Mahathir's testimony was crucial. "We counsel have to beg here, my lord, why?" he asked.

THE STATESMAN

13 APR 2008



508  
20/4

## SHOW TRIAL

### Malaysia rigs its judicial process

WHILE Nawaz Sharif gets convicted on the unlikely charge of hijacking, this is also the anniversary of the conviction of another man who is the most prominent political prisoner in his country. Anwar Ibrahim, Mahathir Mohamad's former deputy deposed in 1998, is now on trial on the medieval charge of sodomy, which in Malaysia carries a maximum sentence of 20 years imprisonment as well as whipping. The attitude of the court suggests that the intention is to keep Ibrahim off balance, so that he cannot shape up, in prison, as the prime focus of political dissent. The court thus adjourned for two months because Judge Ariffin Jaka complained of an aching back; thereafter, Jaka repeatedly interrupted Ibrahim's lawyer when the latter argued that Mahathir be asked to testify. Ibrahim argues that Mahathir issued orders to police and government agencies to fabricate the sodomy charges; if this is not indeed the case, Mahathir should have no reservations about being cross-examined. In a recent twist, Mahathir has said that he may appear in court, provided the judge summons him; this is of course the million dollar question, as the propriety of the judge himself is in doubt.

Although Kuala Lumpur was blocked by street protests at the time of Ibrahim's conviction, Mahathir's party, the UMNO, is not doing too badly, having won a two-thirds majority in recent elections. Mahathir's successful defiance of the IMF during the Asian crisis, in contrast to Indonesia which was sunk by IMF-prescribed austerity, may have won him popularity, with Malaysians voting with their cheque-books rather than their hearts. But as Razaleigh Hamzah — former finance minister who recently challenged Mahathir's leadership of the UMNO — has pointed out, the long-term trend is that Asia's established political parties are in decline. While the UMNO has ruled Malaysia since independence, recent years have seen unprecedented protests against Mahathir. His popularity may last only until the next slump, which according to many analysts is round the corner.

THE STATESMAN

20 APR 2000

# Mahathir not to testify in Anwar's trial

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, APRIL 21. The Malaysian Prime Minister, Mr. Mahathir Mohammad will not be called to testify in the ongoing trial of his former heir-apparent, Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, following a ruling on this sensitive issue by the High Court in Kuala Lumpur today.

Even as the trial judge, Mr. Justice Arifin Jaka, pronounced his ruling, Mr. Anwar gave vent to his frustration in the courthouse itself and informed his counsel of his inclination to "abandon" the defence altogether, according to independent observers of the day's proceedings.

With Mr. Anwar later accepting the advice of his lead counsel to reconsider the move of giving up a defence, the court was informed accordingly and the hearings will resume next week. Mr. Anwar sequentially dismissed as Deputy Prime Minister, arrested and beaten up in a prison cell in September 1998, was later found guilty by the High Court on charges of having abused his authority while in power in a bid to scuttle a police investigation into certain allegations that he had indulged in sexual misconduct. On April 14 last year, Mr. Anwar was convicted on that score and sentenced to a six-year prison term, which he is presently serving besides having filed an appeal against that judgment.

The current trial pertains to allegations that Mr. Anwar had committed a serious offence of "sodomy." In mounting a legal case, now unsuccessful, to bring the Prime Minister to the witness stand, Mr. Anwar alleged that the present case was but one aspect of a high-level political conspiracy unleashed against him. Mr. Mahathir, who had at an early stage of the "Anwar saga" hinted that the former Deputy Prime Minister was removed from office as much on perceived moral grounds as any, later indicated willingness to testify in this case if asked by the court to do so.



Mahathir Mohamad

Delivering the ruling today, Mr. Justice Arifin noted that not an iota of evidence was brought before the court to show that the Prime Minister was involved in a political conspiracy against Mr. Anwar. The judge also ruled that it would be an abuse of the court process if the Prime Minister were to be called to testify in these circumstances, according to those present at the court.

Mr. Anwar, disappointed by the ruling, told his defence team that his confidence in the judicial process had been "eroded." The defence regretted, too, the lack of an opportunity to appeal against today's ruling, but it kept open the option about a further participation in these judicial proceedings.

THE HINDU

22 APR 2000

# Hostages: Malaysia weighing options

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, APRIL 27. The Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, today said his Government was 'not discounting any options' to secure the release of the 21 hostages including foreigners held by suspected pirate-abductors with presumptive links to a separatist Muslim outfit in the predominantly Catholic Philippines. Dr. Mahathir's comment acquired importance in the context of conflicting signals about whether or not some of the hostages had indeed been freed.

Stressing that Malaysia would "try to negotiate first," Dr. Mahathir again placed his country back in the forefront of the efforts to free those who were taken hostage at Sipadan island off the Sabah coastline on Sunday night. The international focus had yesterday shifted almost entirely to the Philippines over this hostage crisis.

Meanwhile, the Philippines President, Mr. Joseph Estrada, appointed a chief negotiator to liaise with the abductors. This was a sequel to the determination by security officials on both sides that the kidnapers had brought their hostages to a location at the southern tip of the Filipino archipelago-State near the maritime boundary between the two countries.

The chief negotiator is Mr. Nur Misuari, formerly head of the mainstream Moro National Liberation Front, which entered into a peace deal with Manila in the mid-1990s and gave up its demand for carving a sovereign

Muslim state out of southern Philippines. Accepting Manila's 'mandate' to negotiate the release of the hostages, Mr. Nur Misuari said he was beginning his task on the basis of the initial information that the kidnapers, whose political identity had not yet been clearly established, were pressing for a substantive demand. There was no indication that they demanded a huge ransom amount as the price for the freedom of their captives.

Sending a signal to the kidnapers that he was for a 'serious' negotiation and 'not a hanky-panky' deal with them, Mr. Nur outlined their perceived first demand in political terms. They seemed to want that Mr. Estrada should take steps to implement fully an understanding that he had, while he was Vice-President, entered into the Abu Sayyaf group which had not to this day given up separatism, Mr. Nur hinted.

The Malaysian Ambassador to the Philippines, Mr. Arshad Hussein, scotched speculation in Manila that Kuala Lumpur might be willing to pay ransom to the abductors in an apparent unilateral bid. The Foreign Minister, Mr. Harnid Albar, also made it clear in Kuala Lumpur that he was 'confident' that his country and the Philippines would 'cooperate' to bring this crisis to a satisfactory end. He did not wish to seek assistance from the countries whose nationals were affected. The Malaysian Defence Minister, Mr. Najib Tun Razak, said Manila and Kuala Lumpur had augmented security cooperation.

THE HINDU

28 APR 2000

# Hostages safe, says Malaysia

THE STAR  
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

SEMPORNA, April 29. — Malaysian police believe that the 21 hostages abducted by gunmen from Sipadan on Sunday are "safe under the circumstances". The pirates had not made any ransom or other demands till yesterday.

Inspector-general of police, Mr Norian Mai, said unconfirmed information from sources say that the victims, including Malaysians, Filipinos, Germans, South Africans, Finns, French and a Lebanese were safe.

However, he could not positively say if the victims were being provided food and other essentials.

Mr Mai's statement comes after the immediate kin, relatives and friends of the locals who were abducted went to the Semporna jetty police to await the return of their loved ones following a news report claim-

ing that eight of the nine Malaysian hostages were released on Thursday night.

It was the first time that anxious and emotionally charged relatives who have little or no news on the condition of their kin came out in full force only to be told that there were no hostages released. The news had been denied later.

Mr Mai promised hostages' families that they would be informed immediately if information was obtained on any new development from the Philippine authorities. "From the latest information we have, there is no new development in the kidnapping."

Asked if Malaysian police was involved in joint operations with Philippine authorities, he said, the operation was being conducted by their counterparts and Malaysia was only providing intelligence.

Malaysian police, meanwhile, arrested seven people believed

to be the local links to the gunmen. Mr Mai said more arrests were likely.

"These people were not directly linked to the abduction but provided information to the kidnappers," Mr Mai said. He refused to elaborate.

### Demand rejected

The Philippines defence secretary today rejected Muslim rebel demands to replace the government's hostage negotiator bidding to resolve guerrilla threats to kill foreign captives held on southern Jolo island, adds Reuters from Manila.

A man identifying himself as a spokesman for the Abu Sayyaf said yesterday they would behead foreign hostages if demands for foreign mediation and an end to government military action were not met.

"Let's allow the man in the field to decide these things on how to proceed," the defence

secretary, Mr Orlando Mercado told Reuters.

"The main man in the negotiations is ... (Nur) Misuari and I think it is he who would have a say as regards how it would go," Mr Mercado added.

The government appointed Mr Nur Misuari, a former Muslim rebel, to try to win freedom for the hostages but in a call to a local radio station, Abu Sabaya, who said he was a rebel spokesman, said this was unacceptable as Mr Misuari was trying to divide the Muslims.

Abu Sayyaf is fighting for an Islamic state in the south of the Philippines.

The radio station also took a call from another man who said he was one of the South African captives, the first contact made since the hostages were abducted, and he called for international help to stop military action "for the safety of the hostages".

RECEIVED

30 APR 2000

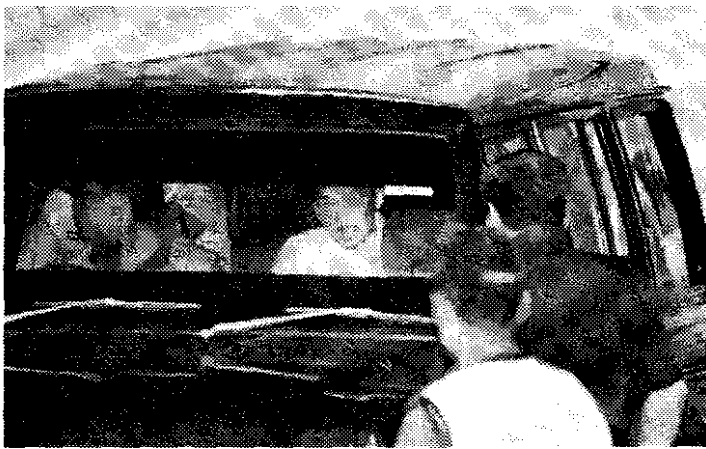
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## Anwar appears in court

**KUALA LUMPUR, SEPT. 27.** The former Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, appeared in court today after spending two weeks in hospital but a judge postponed the resumption of his trial to check whether he was healthy enough to attend court.

The High Court judge, Mr. Ariffin Jaka, put off the trial to confer with a uniformed nurse who Mr. Anwar's lawyers said, came from the hospital where the ex-minister was taken on Sept. 10 after alleging he had been poisoned.

Mr. Anwar, who was sentenced in April to six years in jail for corruption, has said political opponents sought to poison him with arsenic. The Government has dismissed his allegations as a political manoeuvre before the general elections due by mid-2000. The hospital said on Saturday that Mr. Anwar was healthy enough to attend the sodomy trial, which began in June, but that he would remain in hospital until medical tests were completed. Mr. Anwar was seen entering the capital's



**The former Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, sits inside the police car as he leaves the hospital for his sodomy trial at the High Court in Kuala Lumpur on Monday. — AP**

High Court this morning, the first time he had been seen in public since he was taken to hospital.

Mr. Anwar's allegations of poisoning prompted thousands of supporters to stage the first anti-Government street demonstra-

tions in five months. Rumours that Mr. Anwar was seriously ill have periodically shaken the financial markets since he was taken to hospital. The National University Hospital as well as Mr. Anwar's wife have dismissed the rumours. — Reuters

**THE HINDU**  
28 SEP 1999