DAP agrees with Mahathir that Indonesia should not be condemned for the organised mass gang-rapes of women but the crimes against humanity should be condemned not only by all decent and right-thinking human beings all over the world, but also by the Malaysian Government and ASEAN

Media Conference Statement
***by* Lim Kit Siang**

(Petaling Jaya, *Wednesday*): Yesterday, in Seremban in his meeting with leaders from Barisan Nasional component parties, heads of departments and other community leaders, the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad expressed worry that there were efforts among the Chinese press and the DAP to attack Indonesia for the riots which had affected the Chinese in that country.

He appealed to the Chinese press and DAP not to use Malaysia to attack Indonesia on their internal problems.

I agree with Mahathir that Indonesia should not be condemned for the organised mass gang-rape of women during the Indonesian turmoils in May, but the crimes against humanity should be condemned by all decent and right-thinking human beings all over the world as well as by the Malaysian Government and ASEAN.

Malaysia must maintain the best of neighbourly relations with Indonesia as both are ASEAN members as well, but this should not close the eyes, ears and conscience of the Malaysian government and people to gross brutalities and atrocities committed against women and children, especially when they are organised mass gang-rapes.

Accoding to the the latest issue of Asiaweek (July 24, 1998), the atrocities and brutalities committed in Indonesia in May caused "1,188 people dead, as many as 468 women raped, and 40 malls, 2,470 shophouses and 1,119 cars looted or destroyed".

Asiaweek said: "A month-long Asiaweek investigation, that included interviews with military officers, lawyers, human-rights activists, victims and witnesses, suggests that the Trisakti shootings, the riots that followed and the rapes of Chinese women were indeed planned."

It said: "If the riots were orchestrated, there had to be a mastermind. His identity may never be fully substantiated, but one man has been consistently linked to the violence: Suharto's son-in-law, Lt.-Gen. Prabowo Subianto, at the time commander of the elite Army Strategic Reserves (Kostrad)."

Asiaweek quoted a senior Indonesian military officer as saying that "Probowo wanted to create such chaos that his rival, armed forces chief Gen. Wiranto, would be unable to restore order. Suharto, in Egypt at the time, would have had to declare martial law. As chief of Kostrad, a key combat-ready unit, Prabowo would have been the only one able to take charge. That's one theory. Others say he wanted to impress Suharto by sowing chaos - and then proving he could control it."

The Far Eastern Economic Review (July 23, 1998) said that eye-witness accounts catalogued in a comprehensive report sent to the state-appointed National Commission on Human Rights have one common underlying theme: *The violence was premeditated and organized and not spontaneous*.

Marzuki Darusman, deputy chairman of the National Commission of Human Rights in Indonesia, was quoted as telling FEER: "This is the first time we are describing a violation in Indonesia as a crime against humanity - the codeword the United Nations used for ethnic cleansing in Bosnia", where the majority Serbs sought to systematically eliminate the Muslim minority.

The Thailand daily, The Nation, carried an editorial on Sunday under the heading: **"Victims need a credible gang-rape probe"** said:

"According to Indonesian military chief Wiranto there was no evidence that gang rapes occurred during the 48 hours when thousands went on a racist frenzy against the Chinese minority in Jakarta last May. The military, he said, had visited 20 hospitals but found not a single report of the rapes.

"Few believed him. Many rape victims said their assailants sported military-style crew-cut hair. Others saw men who appeared to be from the military help orchestrate the riots. Indeed, of all people, Wiranto should know that getting the military to investigate the rapes is much like asking the fox to determine who raided the chicken coop."

The Malaysian Government had been one of the loudest voices in the international community against the genocide and crimes against humanity in Bosnia, which had been strongly supported by the DAP.

The Malaysian Government cannot remain silent against the heinous crimes against humanity perpetrated in our neighbouring country in Indonesia, and Malaysia must speak up as loudly and righteously in international forums to demand justice be given to the victims of the gang-rapes and mass slaughters in Indonesia as in the case of the Bosnian victims of Serbian atrocities.

I do not know why Mahathir has picked on the Chinese press and the DAP for taking a stand against the atrocities and crimes against humanity in Indonesia in May, when the Malaysian government had very rightly taken a very clear stand both inside the country and in international forums against similar atrocities and crimes against humanity in Bosnia committed by the Serbs.

Although DAPSY took the lead in Malaysia to speak up against the atrocities of gang rapes and mass slaughters in Indonesia, this is an issue which transcends political parties, race, religion or even nationalities as it must be seen solely as a human rights issue.

This was why I am happy that Barisan Nasional leaders like the Gerakan President and Primary Industries Minister, Datuk Seri Dr. Lim Keng Yaik, the Penang Gerakan Chairman and Penang Chief Minister, Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, lower-level MCA leaders like the Deputy Home Minister, Datuk Ong Ka Ting and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Transport Ministry, Chor Chee Heung, (who was showing gruesome photographs of the victims of the brutalities and gang-rapes to other MPs at Parliament House yesterday) together with some 100 NGOs and civic organisations representing Malaysians regardless or race and religion have publicly come out to take a strong stand against these crimes against humanity.

Yesterday, for instance, a group of 13 organisations including Sisters-in-Islam, Women's Aid Organisation, Persatuan Sahabat Wanita, Women Crisis Centre expressed deep concern for the violence against the women, demanding that the rape victims should get legal help.

In Indonesia, Indonesian women organisations have also spearheaded protests and held demonstrations against the organised mass gang-rapes, highlighting the concern of Indonesian women against the atrocities although the victims were mostly Indonesian Chinese.

Just as Malaysia became the custodian of world conscience in the crimes against humanity perpetrated on the Bosnians, because it was a human rights issue and not because it affected the Muslims, similarly let Malaysia be the custodian of world conscience in the atrocities and organised mass gang rapes perpetrated against innocent women and children because they are human beings and not because they are mostly ethnic Chinese.

I hope Keng Yaik, who is the only Cabinet Minister so far to publicly denounce the mass gang rapes in Indonesia, would explain and convince the Cabinet meeting today to take a policy stand against these crimes against humanity committed in Indonesia, consistent with our clear stand against similar crimes against humanity in Bosnia-Herzegovina.
DAP proposes an all-party conference to condemn the organised mass gang rapes as "crimes against humanity" while reaffiring Malaysia's commitment to maintain the closest of neighbourly relations with Indonesia

Indonesian President Habibie has promised an independent commission to investigate what he has himself described as the "most inhuman event in the history of the nation".

ASEAN should assist President Habibie to cleanse Indonesia of the dark stain on her international reputation by offering an independent ASEAN Human Rights Commission to investigate into the organised mass gang rapes.

This is a subject which should be top on the agenda of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Manila this week, where ASEAN countries should discuss the atrocities committed in May not to denigrate Indonesia but to find ways to assist the Indonesian government to convince the international society that it was never a party and would not condone such atrocities.

Malaysia has declared full support for the establishment of the International Criminal Court last week which turned a 50-year dream for a permanent war crimes tribunal into reality although the United States Government had expressed its opposition.

The ICC, which will sit in The Hague, is complementary to national legal jurisdictions. It will have jurisdiction over four crimes - crime of genocide; crime against humanity; war crimes; and crime of aggression.

A crime against humanity implies "*part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack*." Among these crimes are enslavement, torture, rape, forced pregnancy and forced sterilisation.

What happened in Indonesia in May, the gang rapes and mass slaughters, were clearly crimes against humanity.

It would make a mockery of Malaysia's support for the establishment of the ICC if Malaysia is not prepared to condemn crimes against humanity such as the organised mass gang rapes in Indonesia - which will give ammunition to the United States to justify its opposition to the establishment of the ICC.

DAP proposes the holding of an all-party conference to condemn the organised mass gang rapes as "crimes against humanity" while reaffiring Malaysia's commitment to maintain the closest of neighbourly relations with Indonesia, as Malaysia's double contribution in international relations, firstly towards the enhancement of closer Malaysia-Indonesia relations and secondly in promoting the creation of a global civil society where crimes against humanity are a thing of the past.

(22/7/98)

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