

## **COMMENTS BY PRIME MINISTER LEE HSIEN LOONG ON THE RE-ARREST OF MAS SELAMAT KASTARI**

I had a four-eye lunch with Datuk Seri Najib in Pattaya on 11 April. It was an impromptu arrangement which we made after the ASEAN meeting was called off because of the Red Shirt demonstrations. Datuk Seri Najib told me that the Malaysians had arrested Mas Selamat Kastari. I responded that I had been informed about this, and thanked him for Malaysia's generous support and help. I said that the terrorism problem affects both of us. The JI group remains active in the region, and we must work together to counter them as well as other such groups. I especially appreciated the close cooperation and trust between ISD and its Malaysian counterpart, the Special Branch.

DPM Wong Kan Seng had earlier told me about Mas Selamat's rearrest by the Malaysians. I knew that ISD had been working hard on the case, and had found some leads which they had given to the Malaysian authorities. But we could not say anything publicly or else it would jeopardise the operation. I was happy and relieved that Mas Selamat had been found and arrested before he had done any harm. Kan Seng told me that the Malaysians had asked us to keep this quiet for the time being. I replied that we had to respect this, even though I knew that Singaporeans would be very anxious to know the news. So we held the information very tightly.

On Thursday afternoon when the all Ministers were having our weekly Pre-Cabinet lunch, Kan Seng received a phone call informing him that the Straits Times had asked ISD to confirm their scoop which the ST said it came from the KL correspondent, that Mas Selamat has been arrested by the Malaysians. As the story had leaked, we had no choice but to confirm it. It was only then that Kan Seng told the Ministers that Mas Selamat had been arrested, the news had leaked, and we would be confirming the story. They were taken completely by surprise.

I thank all the officers who have been involved in hunting for and tracking down Mas Selamat over this last year. I never had any doubt that we would eventually find Mas Selamat, because I knew the quality and commitment of the officers working on this. ISD had recovered quickly from the mistakes which led to Mas Selamat's escape, put things right, and set themselves to finding and arresting him back. But nevertheless it is good that we have now got him. Our security agencies work quietly and anonymously, keeping Singapore safe. The public only hears about their work occasionally, for example when things go wrong. But we owe them more than most Singaporeans realise.

We must not think that Mas Selamat's arrest is the end of our problem. The terrorism situation in Southeast Asia is under control, but the threat is far from over. Once in a while there is an attack somewhere, so far fortunately not in

Singapore. But for every attack reported in the newspapers there are many more plots which the security agencies uncover, track and hopefully disrupt. These never make it into the public consciousness, but we know about them from intelligence reports. Our challenge is to keep up our guard without getting fatigued or complacent. The price of security is eternal vigilance.

**PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE**  
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