

17 DEC 1996  
Aussie-Racial  
AUSSIE PREMIER TO ACT ON RACE ABUSE CHARGE

MELBOURNE, Dec 17 (Bernama) -- The Australian government today expressed concern about reports of racist attacks on foreign students.

Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said the government would continue to fight racism in Australia while Education Minister Senator Amanda Vanstone said people who committed racist attacks against foreign students were criminals and should be condemned.

Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett said he would write to Prime Minister Datuk seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad offering to investigate reports of a Malaysian student, Adrina Shazlin Shukor, 22, being racially abused.

Senator Vanstone claimed that racist attacks on students were extremely rare but should be taken seriously.

Downer said the federal government found such behaviour abhorrent and was committed to fight racism wherever it might occur.

Their comments came after Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia might recall its students from Australia if their safety was threatened by racist behaviour.

Kennett, who did part of his National Service at Terendak Camp in Melaka in the 60s, said: "This is not something that we accept. It is certainly not something that we tolerate when it is brought to our attention.

"I certainly intend writing to the Prime Minister indicating that if he wants to provide any further information we will certainly do our best to follow it up."

Adrina told Bernama in Melbourne that she was racially abused outside a 7-Eleven outlet here recently. She said she was frightened and upset by the verbal attack.

Professor David Beanland, the vice-chancellor of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), where Adrina is a final-year commerce student, said the univeristy regarded the incident involving Adrina as inexcusable.

"Victorian and Australian universities have stepped up efforts in the face of the race debate to ensure that international students are welcome and safe in our campuses," Beanland said.

"Individual incidents like the one reported today emphasise the need for the Australian government to bring on the domestic public education campaign to encourage tolerance and reinforce the value of our multicultural society," he said.

Senator Vanstone said such attacks as suffered by Adrina could not be ignored and people found to have carried out such attacks shoud be made to feel the full weight of the law as well as the condemnation of the Australian community. -- BERNAMA

NDC JK