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LEAD Anwar-Timor

CONFERENCE ON EAST TIMOR WILL NOT BE ALLOWED, SAYS ANWAR

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 7 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today the government remains firm in not allowing the Second Asia Pacific Conference on East Timor (Apcet II) to be held in the country.

He said the Home Ministry and the police were monitoring the organisers of the conference and would take the appropriate actions in accordance with the regulations and laws of the country if they continued to be stubborn and refused to call off the conference.

"We have forbidden it and we hope they will abide by the decision of the government," he told reporters at Parliament House.

The spokesman of the organisers, Dr Sanusi Othman, had said on Tuesday that the conference would proceed as scheduled from Nov 9 to 11.

The conference is expected to be attended by 200 people representing 75 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from 24 countries.

Anwar said the decision to disallow the conference was made by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is the Home Minister, in order to protect the good relations between Malaysia and Indonesia.

It was also in line with Malaysia's policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

"Thus, the Cabinet (at its meeting yesterday) also decided to fully support the stand taken by the Home Ministry after the Deputy Home Minister (Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob) had given his opinion," he said.

He said the Home Ministry has banned the foreign speakers invited for the conference from entering the country and withheld the issuance of visas to certain people.

Suitable measures in accordance with the country's regulations and laws would be taken to prevent the conference from going ahead.

"We have also informed Indonesia (that Malaysia does not allow the conference) to ensure that nothing would happen that could jeopardise our relations," he said.

However, Anwar said he was unaware of a report that the representative of "Asia Pacific Coalition for East Timor Chapter in the Philippines", Renato Constantino, was deported from Malaysia this morning.

Constantino, who helped organise a similar conference in Manila in 1994, was reported to have been deported at 7am today after being barred from entering the country by immigration officers at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International Airport in Subang.

Anwar said Malaysia was not being hypocritical in stopping the conference on East Timor while voicing support for human rights issues elsewhere.

"This is the internal affair of Indonesia because it (East Timor) is part of Indonesia. Because of this, in handling this matter, we should respect the national integrity of Indonesia.

"Even if it needs to be discussed, we follow the Asean way which gives priority to discussion by the leaders," he said.

On a statement by the self-exiled East Timorese leader, Jose Ramos-Horta, that he wished to meet him and Dr Mahathir to seek a resolution of the issue, Anwar said: "I will inform the Prime Minister." --

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