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Anwar-Cambodia

STOP PICKING ON US, ANWAR TELLS WESTERN MEDIA

By: Zulkefli Salleh

MANILA, Aug 23 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim today criticised the western media for picking on Malaysian investors in Cambodia and Papua New Guinea for flouting rules.

He questioned why an Australian company which held a logging concession in PNG for decades was never touched by the media but once a Malaysian company bought over the logging concession it was pounced upon by the media.

Anwar said this at a press conference here when asked by a western journalist to comment on the fear of a so-called Greater Malaysia in economic terms said to be pursued by Malaysia in the Indochinese country.

He implied that this was another example of the condescending attitude of the West towards Southeast Asian or Asian countries.

Anwar was here for a three-day working visit in conjunction with the Philippine Centennial Revolution celebrations and to attend a meeting of the Southeast Asia Beyond 2000 Group. He later returned to Kuala Lumpur.

"I don't choose to defend our businessmen. Businessmen are businessmen, sometimes they follow the rules, sometimes they flout the rules," he said.

Anwar said what was necessary was adequate supervision.

"But the advantage in Malaysia is that we do (provide supervision). I don't think many countries will call them up to caution or reprimand them."

Anwar said because of this governments could trust Malaysia and its businessmen.

"But what worries me is this. The moment a Malaysian company buys over a logging concession in the PNG the entire media attacks us. That particular company was owned by an Australian for decades but it was a non-issue," he said.

"When it was owned by a white and plundered it was permissible. The moment it is owned by an Indio (Asian) it is wrong.

"I would say, I'm not defending whether you are white or Indio, if you are wrong, morally wrong, you are wrong," he said.

He said the Malaysian government on its part had called up its businessmen who flouted the laws overseas and asked them to make amends.

Anwar, who is Finance Minister, said in the case of Cambodia he had personally, after discussing with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, talked to that country's leaders to see what adjustments need to be done.

He clarified that the advocates of the Asean 10 and the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) never envisaged a Southeast Asia confined to itself nor a closed East Asia.

"We reject any condescending attitude. We reject subtle attitude or attempts to subvert economically or to dominate us," he said.

Anwar said this was why Southeast Asia needed to have a strong, cohesive Asean and effective rapport among East Asian economies. -- BERNAMA

ZS YBY