

15 JAN 1997

ANWAR: NO REASON TO INTERVENE IN RINGGIT'S CURRENT MOVEMENT

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 15 (Bernama) -- Deputy prime minister and finance minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said he saw no reason why the authorities should intervene in the movement of the ringgit which had been rising of late.

The ringgit closed higher today at 2.4745/45 to the US dollar from 2.4825/35 yesterday.

On Monday, the ringgit touched a 17-month high of 2.4685/95 while about a week ago it was hovering around the the 2.52 level.

"Why should we?" Anwar asked when speaking to reporters after chairing the Cabinet Committee on Essential Goods here.

He said the ringgit had been strong and stable over the past year.

Foreign exchange dealers had attributed the bullishness of the ringgit to Malaysia's relatively high interest rates. They also said foreign fund managers were keen to tap the high yielding rates.

On allegations that there had been some dishonest dealings in the award of telecommunications contracts in the country, Anwar said he had received some preliminary information on the matter.

He said if the allegations were true, then action would be taken against those involved.

Anwar said he had informed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on the matter before he left for his overseas trip to the United States and Japan and had also directed the relevant authorities to start investigations.

"So far, we do not have information which would enable us to take action since it is too general and insufficient to verify claims of irregularities in awarding the telecommunications tender," he said.

"Both the prime minister and I have discussed the matter and if there were malpractices, appropriate action will be taken," he said.

Anwar said he had directed the contract division of the Finance Ministry to "talk to Telekom Malaysia" so that all procedures were fully observed and transparent.

"The chief executive officer of Telekom Malaysia, Datuk Mohd Said Mohd Ali has been alerted before he left for the United States together with the prime minister, " he said. --BERNAMA

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