

26/03/1997

DPM: Don't mix politics with sport

Tengku Sariffuddin; Jasbir Singh

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today political parties should not mix politics with sports.

"Sports associations from any country, to me, are apolitical and have got nothing to do with politics.

"Whether it is from a recognised country or not, a sports association is a sports association even if it happens to be from Israel," he told reporters after speaking at the third French Business Forum On Asean Perspectives at the Shangri-la hotel.

Anwar was asked to comment on the demonstration staged today by more than 1,000 Pas members who protested against the presence of the Israeli cricket team here to take part in the Carlsberg International Cricket Council Trophy.

A memorandum to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, asking the Government to cancel visas given to team members, was also delivered to the Prime Minister's Department.

Pas deputy president Abdul Hadi Awang, who led the protesters, handed over the memo to Dr Mahathir's private secretary Datuk Abdul Aziz Samsuddin.

The memo, signed by Abdul Hadi, said Pas totally opposed the presence of the Israeli team and urged the Government to cancel their visas and deport them.

Speaking at a Press conference later, Abdul Hadi said although the team was here for a sporting competition, one could not separate politics from the matter as issuing of visas was the key to future relations between the two countries.

"Pas is extremely shocked at the decision by the Government to issue visas to the Israeli team members even though there are no diplomatic relations between the two countries.

"Even though Malaysia has openly declared that it does not recognise the Israel State, by allowing the Israeli team here, it has indirectly acknowledged the existence of Israel as a State."

The Prime Minister said on Sunday that the decision to allow the Israeli team to play here was to show Israelis that people from various religions could live together and that Muslims could co-operate with others, as they did in Malaysia, without conflict.

(END)