

20 OCT 1997

Anwar-MAS

GOVT WANTS AMICABLE END TO MAS-KADIR PROBLEM

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 20 (Bernama) -- The government wants an amicable end to the problem between Malaysia Airlines (MAS) and Human Resources Deputy Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The national carrier last week filed a RM80-million defamation suit against Abdul Kadir for his statement that the standard of MAS service has declined.

Approached by reporters on the matter here today, Anwar did not elaborate but said he met MAS executive chairman Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli last Saturday to discuss the suit.

Anwar said he briefed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today on his meeting with Tajudin.

Reporters met Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, at the Treasury after he briefed Barisan Nasional Members of Parliament on the 1998 Budget which he tabled in Parliament last Friday.

Asked whether the government would ask MAS to withdraw the suit against Abdul Kadir, Anwar said: "I will deal with it later."

Last Saturday Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik advised MAS to withdraw the suit.

On Dr Ling's recent remarks which had angered MAS staff, Anwar said: "We acknowledge that MAS has taken steps to improve its service but at the same time we also respect Dr Ling's intentions in making constructive criticisms as representative of that of his cabinet colleagues.

"We've discussed the matter several times in the cabinet and the Transport Minister has conveyed such wishes to Tajudin...obviously we defend ministers' right to give advice," said Anwar.

Anwar, in his two-hour briefing, explained to the MPs current developments and measures to be taken in next year's budget.

He asked them to inform the people that the government had to deal wisely with the current economic problems resulting from the depreciation of the ringgit.

"And this will take time. I'm confident that measures announced (in the 1998 Budget) would lead to the recovery of the economy," he said.

On claims by parties that the 1998 Budget did not reflect the country's account deficits and the ringgit situation, he said: "We should not allow a depression to occur ... we have to maintain a balance between settling current problems and sustaining long-term growth."

He said the government did not want to impose hardship on the people given the already prevailing difficulty.

"I don't think we should take some more radical measures beyond what we consider to be able to sustain the level of economic growth," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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