

15 NOV 1997

Keng Yaik-US

KENG YAIK BLAMES US EMBASSY FOR PETRONAS ISSUE

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 15 (Bernama) -- Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik today blamed the United States embassy here for "giving the wrong information" to the US delegation coming to Malaysia to probe Petronas' business dealings with Iran.

He said the embassy had informed the US delegation, which is expected to arrive here next week to "probe" the deal, that it was "not safe (for the US delegation) to come to Malaysia."

"The US embassy here is not giving the right information. They are sending the wrong message," he told a news conference after opening the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats general assembly and forum on "Governance of Multi-ethnic Societies in Asia", here.

The US had recently warned five international companies that they were running the risk of real sanctions if investigations found any of their business dealings contravened its Iran-Libya Sanctions Act.

Russia's Gazprom, Malaysia's Petronas and France's Total SA are involved in a US\$2-billion joint venture deal with Iran to develop part of the giant South Pars gas field.

It was reported yesterday that the US embassy here had issued a notice last Thursday to warn its nationals of potential threats after it received threatening calls over the draft resolution by several US Congressmen against Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the Petronas probe.

It was reported that one of the callers said he was from the Malaysian Muslim Martyrs' Movement.

There are 6,100 Americans working in Malaysia. Of that, 235 are officials representing various US government agencies while the rest are company executives.

Dr Lim, who is also Gerakan president, slammed the embassy for not doing what they are supposed to do, which is to create a friendly relationship between the two countries.

"Obviously they are not doing their job," he said, questioning whether they had their own personal agenda.

Saying that he was "critical" of the embassy, the minister said: "They (the embassy) pour oil when they see a little smoke, not even fire."

When asked what his "findings" on the embassy were based on, he said: "They are the ones who tell the Americans 'don't come (to Malaysia) or you are liable to be shot'. Do you think it is right? Are they not alarmists?."

Dr Lim's statement comes two days after about 100 Barisan Nasional Youth members held a peaceful demonstration in front of the US embassy protesting the Congressmen's draft resolution and the Petronas probe.

Yesterday, Solicitor-General Datuk Heliliah Yusof met US embassy officials for more than an hour at the embassy building in Jalan Tun Razak here.

On the draft resolution asking Dr Mahathir to apologise or resign for his purported anti-American and anti-semitic remarks, Dr Lim said Gerakan would propose that the Barisan Nasional send a delegation to the US to meet the Congressmen.

He said he suspected that the Congressmen had their own agenda in coming out with the resolution. -- BERNAMA

ES JK JK