

20 NOV 1997

Anwar-US

MALAYSIA NO COLONY OF ANY SUPERPOWER, SAYS ANWAR

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 20 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said Malaysia is not a colony of any superpower and therefore there is no reason why the country should be dictated by the Americans.

"We are an independent country and thus we have to safeguard our own interest. Who we choose as our leaders is our rights...not the Americans or the Congressmen," he said when opening the 13th Convocation Fiesta of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) at its campus in Gombak, here today.

Referring to the debate in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday where he tabled a motion condemning action by a group of 34 U.S. Congressmen, Anwar said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed had been leading the country and endorsed by the people in a number of democratically-held elections.

"I'm not suggesting the American government or the administration or its people share the views of the 34 Congressmen, but certainly we have to make a stand," said Anwar.

The draft resolution before the U.S. House of Representatives sponsored by Robert Wexler, a Democrat from Florida demands that Dr Mahathir either apologise or resign over alleged anti-Semitic remarks.

"We are not reacting to this statement but to give a clear message to this action through the international community and also to the U.S. Congressmen," he said.

Anwar said Umno and the Barisan Nasional is still strong and intact, able to lead and manage the economy and able to speak up to anybody including the U.S. and Israel.

"We are not anti-Jews nor anti-Semitic because there is no way in Islam we are asked to be anti-Jews. But, yes we condemn Israel's aggression against the Arabs," he said.

"Thus, we have to mark clearly a distinction between Israel and innocent Jews. In anywhere, in any part of the world, even if there are Jews in Malaysia -- if they are citizens, they are citizens. If they come here as tourists, there is no discriminatory prejudice against them," he added.

Anwar said that had been Malaysia's stand in the past and therefore should not be confused.

On the currency crisis, Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, said the opposition parties had been trying to put the blame on the government, accusing it of not knowing how to manage the country's economy.

He said the opposition should understand that the Thai economy would not been as bad if the inherent initial weakness of the Thai fundamentals was not exploited by speculators and manipulators.

Anwar said speculators and manipulators chose a flaw in the economic system to create havoc to raid the country and this was unjust.

"That is precisely the reason why Malaysia has called for a review of the international economic practice that allows a group of speculators and manipulators in the name of currency traders, without rules and regulations, speculate all currency, create havoc and make money at the expense of the ordinary people," he said.

"I don't care if the ringgit falls or not -- but I do care when it affects the welfare of my people. That is the problem that we are facing now, created by a bunch of currency gun slingers. Because the rich and the powerful from the industrialised world benefit from their action, they are not keen or in the position or in the mood to change these rules," Anwar

said.

In a closed door dialogue session with Anwar later, the university's student leaders pledged loyalty and full support to the leadership of Dr Mahathir.

President of the 8000-strong IIUM student representative council Shamsul Iskandar Mohd Akin said they strongly condemned the draft resolution by the Congressmen and the investigations into Petronas' business dealings in Iran.

The resolution was undemocratic while the investigation was against free trade, he said. --BERNAMA

ZAB ABG