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Asean-Anwar

ONLY SPECIFIC PROVISIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS CHARTER FOR REVIEW: ANWAR

KUALA LUMPUR, July 29 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is only calling for the review of specific provisions of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights while it adheres to the fundamental and universal principles of the charter, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today.

Malaysia, he said, accepted the fundamental and universal principles of the 50-year-old declaration of the United Nations.

"What needs to be discussed are some specific provisions like economic and social protection and the democratic process...this is a reasonable request," he told reporters after meeting Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer who called on him.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said on Sunday that Malaysia might submit a proposal to the UN to review the declaration which is about 50 years old and no longer suitable.

Yesterday, US State Secretary Madeleine Albright said the US would fight any attempt to dilute the declaration.

Albright, a former ambassador to the United Nations, vowed that the United States would be relentless in its opposition to any attempt to water down the UN declaration, US State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns told reporters covering the Asean meeting with its 10 dialogue partners.

Anwar said the entry of many nations into the UN over the last decade had made it pressing for a review of the declaration.

He also said that the anti-Asian sentiment in Australia, blown up by Independent Member of Parliament Pauline Hanson, did not affect Malaysia-Australia relations.

Rather, over the last few years bilateral and economic ties between the two nations had progressed tremendously.

"I don't think so. We have seen over the last few years remarkable progress in our relationship," he said when asked by Australian journalists whether the anti-Asian issue had affected Australian image and relations with Malaysia.

Anwar said the relations were not only confined to government-to-government level but were also between the people, civil service, academicians and non-governmental organisations.

He said Malaysia was practical and reasonable enough to understand that the anti-Asian issue was "a very minor minority issue that does not represent the sentiments of the Australian people, certainly not (that of) the Australian government." -- BERNAMA

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