

27 SEP 1997

Anwar-Economy

RINGGIT DEPRECIATION WILL NOT DERAILED VISION 2020, SAYS ANWAR

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 27 (Bernama) -- Depreciation of the ringgit and manipulation of shares at the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange (KLSE) by rogue speculators will not derail the realisation of Vision 2020 to transform Malaysia into a developed country.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim told heads of delegation from Middle East and North Africa attending an economic symposium, who called on him here today, that the problems were only a temporary setback which Malaysia was capable of handling them.

Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, told them that some of Malaysia's achievements since the vision was unveiled by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had exceeded the targetted time-frame.

Finance Ministry deputy secretary-general Datuk Dr Aris Othman told a news conference after the meeting that some members of the delegation posed questions on the impact of the ringgit's depreciation and the attack on the stock market to achieving objectives of Vision 2020.

He said Anwar told them that Malaysia's economic success was not a miracle but attained through hardwork, wise policies and a firm commitment to develop the country and people.

On the difference in impact between Malaysia and Thailand due to the currency crisis and the stock market attack, he said the economic position of the two countries were different.

He said steps taken by the government had saved Malaysia from encountering the same fate like Thailand.

Dr Aris said the delegation from 29 countries and financial institutions attending the three-day symposium jointly organised by the World Bank and Malaysian Government, also showed keen interest on Malaysia's privatisation policy.

Anwar told them that while the government implemented the policy vigorously, it had never neglected development programmes for rural areas, training and education.

To a question from the delegates whether Malaysia was facing a huge foreign debt problem as a result of the privatisation policy, Anwar said foreign borrowings were kept to a low level and was not a problem.

Furthermore, Malaysia's financial reserves were high and big sum of money could be sourced from local banks and financial institutions, he said.

Dr Aris said Anwar explained that in the 60s and 70s, Malaysia had not choice but to attract foreign investments to the country not only to get capital but also to acquire the expertise and market access.

" Now, Malaysia can afford to be selective and we disallow foreign investments which are labour intensive," he said.

The delegation comprising ministers of finance, economy, external trade, planning and development and governors of central banks also sought Anwar's advice on ways to develop a country successfully.

Anwar told them that it was crucial for the government to hear the people's views and pay attention to their needs.

In Malaysia, the government holds dialogues with the various sectors including the private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) before tabling the Budget every year to know the people's needs and make the necessary adjustments when preparing the budget.

After the meeting, which lasted for about an hour, Anwar received a

delegation from Syria comprising Minister for Economy and Foreign Trade
Mohammed Imady and Finance Minister M. Khaled Al-Mahayani at his office. --
BERNAMA

MNY TS