

19 MAY 1997

Anwar-Umno

UMNO TO EXPAND TO SARAWAK ONLY IF PARTY AND STATE LAEDERS AGREE

KUCHING, May 19 (Bernama) -- Umno's entry into Sarawak must be agreed to by the leaders of the party and legitimate Bumiputera leaders in the state, said Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said Umno as a Malay party adopted an open attitude on the question of spreading its wings to Sarawak.

"Umno also has leaders who understand the national and state politics by taking actions based on policies, the constitution and experience," he said in a speech at an all community dinner held here tonight in conjunction with his visit to the state.

Also present were his wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud and wife Puan Sri Hajah Laila Taib.

Anwar, who is the acting Umno president, said the question of Sarawak being marginalised if Umno did not expand to the state did not arise because that was a matter to be decided upon by leaders of Umno and the state

He said he viewed rumours of Umno's presence in Sarawak as merely a political excitement in the state.

"So if you ask why I took so long to explain this issue, it's because I wish to accommodate this political excitement," he added.

Anwar said the rumours were akin to that which implied there was a rift between him and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Sometimes they people concerned preferred to remain silent and "watch the drama" created by the rumours and only react if the situation warranted, he said.

Anwar, who arrived here this afternoon, will fly to Manila tomorrow to attend the Pacific Basin economic conference. -- BERNAMA

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