

# Bahasa daily: Surin has political agenda 19

S 7 11 98

KUALA LUMPUR: Thai Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan has been accused by a Bahasa Malaysia daily of using the issue of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to promote his "political agenda" in Asean.

Surin emerged as the "new puppeteer attempting to intervene in the affairs of Asean," Utusan Malaysia said.

In one of the strongest statements on the Anwar issue so far from a Thai minister, Surin warned on Tuesday that Anwar's trial could damage the unity and power of the 31-year-old Asean.

Although it was an "internal problem for Malaysia," he said it held far-reaching implications for

the region and Asean countries in particular.

Utusan said Surin's remarks came "at a time when the Philippines had begun to show more understanding towards Malaysia's political crisis and Indonesia appeared as if it could not afford to care due to the revolution in its own backyard.

"If we analyse Surin's remarks, it revealed his haste to intervene in Malaysia's internal affairs because he has his own personal interest and political agenda," it said in an editorial.

The newspaper said Surin's agenda was to promote his call for "flexible engagement" in Asean.

"In whatever situation, we believe that Asean uni-

ty should be stepped up and we should not in any way, seek to enhance our own credibility by making ideal but not practical suggestions," the daily said.

"Do Asean leaders want to fight over Anwar Ibrahim and are they willing to sacrifice the harmony and understanding that was built over decades?"

Utusan told Surin to emulate Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, "whose country has many problems with Malaysia but did not interfere in the Anwar issue and on the contrary, came to discuss with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on how to heal relations" -- AFP