

30/09/1998

Abdullah: Let the court decide Anwar's case

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The court should be left to decide whether Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was guilty or not of the sexual misconduct and corrupt practices charges brought against him today.

Stating this, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said in an interview with CNN's Biz Asia in New York that the allegations had been brought to court, the charges had been made and Anwar had denied them.

During the brief interview, Lorraine Hahn asked Abdullah nine questions ranging from Anwar's so-called reformation movement to the economic measures taken to date to the possibility of elections being held soon.

Abdullah was asked if the former Deputy Prime Minister could lead an opposition party if the court found Anwar innocent.

"If he is innocent, he is free ... Malaysia is a democratic country ... he (Anwar) can join the opposition party or form a new party," Abdullah said.

When asked for his views on freedom of speech and the existence of the Internal Security Act, Abdullah said the ISA was needed to deter people from instigating or causing trouble.

"We cannot tolerate unrest in the country. There must be stability in Malaysia for economic development.

"We practise democracy ... we have opposition parties and we have elections."

When Hahn asked Abdullah if he felt Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's days were numbered because of Anwar's reformation movement, Abdullah said: "No ... Umno, of which Dr Mahathir is president, is no stranger to reforms. It has been concentrating on reforms since independence."

On economic matters, Hahn asked if the capital control measures taken such as fixing the exchange rate was a move worth the criticisms it was receiving.

Abdullah said: "Yes, it is worth the criticisms ... it is the only way to do it as we cannot depend on other agencies such as the International Monetary Fund which admitted today that steps it had taken to revive the Asian economy was not working well ... it is not working at all, in fact."

When asked how long the measures would be imposed, Abdullah said it would be until the economy recovered.

"There is no other way to do it. The domestic economy must be revitalised. We have been achieving good results for in January to July this year, Malaysia has a surplus of US\$5 billion (RM19 billion)."

On whether Dr Mahathir will announce elections to be held soon, Abdullah said he had no information about Dr Mahathir wanting to hold elections soon.

(END)