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Anwar to discuss economic strategies during visit to Japan

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PENANG, Sun. - Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today he will be making an official visit to Japan and a short private trip to Taiwan soon to discuss common strategies to rehabilitate the regional economy.

He said he had also contacted his counterparts in Hong Kong, China and the United States to discuss further measures to improve the economic situation in the region.

"We are not going to seek help for Malaysia, but rather to seek a common approach towards rehabilitating the regional economy," he added.

Anwar said his mission would be similar to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's visit to Indonesia and Singapore recently, and later to the Philippines and Thailand.

Malaysia stood by its pledge to provide US\$1 billion aid each to Thailand and Indonesia, he said at his Hari Raya open house in Cherok To' Kun, Bukit Mertajam, today.

"It is in our interest to see our neighbours recover and do well again, and there are already positive indications that the fiscal measures that have been taken will succeed in bringing about an improvement," he said.

Among the hundreds of people who called on him and his wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail to wish them Selamat Hari Raya were Penang Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Hamdan Sheikh Tahir and his wife Toh Puan Zainab Baharuddin, Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, State Executive Councillors and their wives.

Earlier, he said there seemed to a general perception (in the West) that East Asian economic woes were purely due to corruption, cronyism, nepotism and excesses of power.

"I recognise this but we should not be apologetic in stating that we have to undertake these reforms to be more transparent, to have move resolve to combat corruption, excesses of power, to believe in principles of democracy, and inculcate the spirit of a free civil society," Anwar said.

"Therefore, we endorse and support the call, including those by multilateral institutions like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, that we do it as a common resolve on our part.

"But what we detest and consider to be totally unacceptable is the continued hammering and indoctrination by western concerns and powers that assume that corruption, nepotism and excesses of power are the exclusive domain of the East and developing economies.

"The fact is these excesses are to be found both in the West and the East and there should, therefore, be a common global resolve for good governance irrespective of whether it is in the East or the West," he added.

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