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ANWAR'S TRIAL TRANSPARENT, SAYS MANILA

By: E.Sivabalan

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 16 (Bernama) -- The Philippines has admitted that the trial of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is being conducted in "greater transparency".

Its Foreign Minister Domingo Siazon said there was much transparency in Anwar's case.

"It appeared that Anwar's trial is being conducted in a fair manner," he told reporters after attending the bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Philippine President Joseph Estrada on the sidelines of the Apec Leaders' Summit which starts tomorrow.

"It looks alright. The due process is what we have been asking for," he said when asked if Estrada had raised the Anwar issue with Dr Mahathir.

Estrada had on many occasions voiced support for Anwar and he had even said that he might meet Anwar and his wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail when he is in Malaysia for the Apec Summit.

However, Estrada had decided not to meet Anwar and Dr Wan Azizah owing to his tight schedule.

Siazon also said Estrada did not raise the Anwar issue with Dr Mahathir during their bilateral meeting.

Asked if the Philippines was no longer concerned over Anwar's trial now that they have acknowledged that there was transparency, Siazon said: "There is always concern but most of you who are here have seen the reports on the trial".

Siazon said the transparency could be seen by the decision of the Malaysian authorities to allow foreigners to observe the trial.

He said even three Philippine congressmen were in Kuala Lumpur recently "against my advice" to observe the trial.

Asked why Estrada did not raise the Anwar issue with Dr Mahathir, Siazon explained that Estrada had indicated that his views were personal.

"You have to understand in the context they were made. They were made in his personal capacity and secondly, it was when Anwar was seen with physical injury when he was under custody," he said.

Siazon said there were some improvements when Anwar was released from the Internal Security Act (ISA) and also when Dr Mahathir ordered an investigation into Anwar's allegations of police brutality.

Anwar is facing five charges of corruption and five counts of unnatural sex.

The resumed hearing on four of the five corruption charges would start on Nov 23.

Siazon also said he would not meet Anwar's wife Dr Wan Azizah.

On bilateral ties, Siazon said Malaysia and the Philippines enjoyed good relations.

-- BERNAMA

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