

12 OCT 1998

Abdullah-Traitors

FOREIGN MINISTRY STUDYING WAYS OF ACTING AGAINST TRAITORS

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 12 (Bernama) -- The Foreign Ministry is studying the form of legal action that can be taken against the "country's traitors" who have been condemning Malaysia's leaders and discrediting the government overseas.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today the ministry's legal officers were studying how far the actions of former Penang Umno Youth Chief Dr Abdul Rahim Ghouse and former Umno Youth Assistant Secretary Saifuddin Nasution overseas had gone against the law.

"We have no power to detain them over what they have done," he said.

"We are studying the form of legal action against them. Our legal officers are studying how their actions have breached certain laws such as the Sedition Act or other such laws," he said.

He earlier witnessed the signing of bilateral agreements between Malaysia and Swaziland at the Prime Minister's Department here. Swaziland is sandwiched between Mozambique and South Africa and gained independence from Britain in 1968. Its King Mswati III is now on an official visit to Malaysia.

Abdullah was commenting on the move by Abdul Rahim and Saifuddin to condemn Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and discredit the government following the sacking of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from the Cabinet and his expulsion from Umno over alleged corruption and moral misconduct charges.

Abdullah said Malaysian diplomatic missions in the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia, visited by the two men, were monitoring their activities.

Rahim was said to be now in Indonesia and Saifuddin in Thailand.

Abdullah stressed that their activities had not in the least affected the country's interests.

He said Malaysia's ambassadors in the countries concerned had been asked to meet the heads of government and also non-governmental organisations to explain the actual situation.

Asked about the telephone call received by High Court Judge Datuk Augustine Paul, who is the presiding judge in the Anwar case, allegedly from a United States Senator, Abdullah said, "This is one example of interference we cannot accept."

"Such action amounts to interference as though we do not understand the law and are unable to enforce the law well," he added.

Paul, who had lodged a police report over the telephone call, said the caller had asked him to ensure that the trial was fair and that he would be "monitoring the trial" when it began on Nov 2.

-- BERNAMA

RA AAM