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Gore-reaction-roundup

Gore'S PROVOCATIVE REMARKS ANGER MALAYSIANS AT LARGE

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 17 (Bernama) -- Malaysians at large have taken strong exception to United States vice president Al Gore's provocative remarks last night, branding him arrogant, irresponsible and unbecoming of an honoured guest.

They said Gore's remarks lent credence to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's expressed worry that the inclination of a handful of Malaysians to keep on exposing internal problems to foreigners and inviting them to interfere would only result in Malaysia losing her freedom.

Following Gore's remarks irked Malaysians also questioned the validity of the so-called movement for reform of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

In SHAH ALAM, Umno Youth acting chief Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said: "Al Gore and other American leaders who came here as guests don't know or care what is really happening here in the country but they have blatantly interfered with our internal affairs."

Speaking after chairing an Umno Youth Executive Committee meeting at the Selangor Umno headquarters today, Hishammuddin said that during their few days of stay here, US officials through their words and actions had incited instability without knowing the real people who have to deal with their irresponsible actions.

"You incite instability after a few days of arriving in our country and tomorrow you get on your Air Force One back to Washington, probably quite pleased with yourself. But you have left behind real people who have to deal with your irresponsible actions," he said.

Addressing the Apec Business Summit dinner in the federal capital last night where he was the only guest speaker, Gore expressed support for Anwar's anti-government "reformasi" movement.

Hishammuddin said that following Gore's unwarranted remarks, Umno Youth was inundated with telephone calls not only from peace-loving Malaysian but also from Anwar's sympathisers who felt that "enough is enough".

Hishammuddin branded the Americans hypocrites who preached democracy and talked about the rule of law on one hand while condoning riots and street demonstrations on the other.

He said Gore's actions and that of other American officials had only APEC and all that the US was supposed to stand for.

Hishammuddin said Umno Youth urged Dr Mahathir not to stoop to their level to reply to their remarks and let Malaysians deal with them.

He said Umno Youth would also send a memorandum on the issue to the US Embassy in a day or two.

Umno secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik told reporters at Parliament House lobby in Kuala Lumpur that Gore's remarks merely showed the arrogance of the US which makes it its preoccupation to meddle in the internal affairs of other countries.

"I find it rather strange as in the past no leaders have come as Malaysia's guests to meddle in the domestic affairs of the host nation," said Sabbaruddin who is also Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister.

Gore's remarks also showed that the US is indisciplined in terms international relations, said Sabbaruddin.

Also speaking to reporters at Parliament House lobby Second Finance Minister and Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said only an uncultured leader would make rude remarks at a host country.

"I'm convinced that Malaysians will oppose all forms of interference by other countries in our internal affairs," Mustapa said.

He however did not see Gore's remarks would affect Malaysia-US economic ties as American investors and even tourists had never created problems for the government because they were aware of the actual situation in the country.

"The many American businessmen that I met at the Apec meeting are obviously happy to be here, they are aware of the investment opportunities, the peace in Malaysia and understand the country's judicial system," he said.

MCA Youth Chief Datuk Chan Kong Choy said he could not believe that Gore, a leader from a super power could give recognition to street violence.

"His instigations that Malaysians support the so-called movement for reform clearly showed that he does not fully grasp the situation in this country which is far different from what is happening in Indonesia," Chan said.

Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tun Mohamed Zahir Ismail described Gore's remarks last night as out of place.

"His speech was really out of place, it should have not been delivered at a dinner function and should have not dwelled on politics let alone the internal affairs of other countries," Mohamed Zahir said.

The Back-benchers Club in the Dewan Rakyat said heads of government attending the Apec summit here should think twice before doing anything that would undermine the respect that Malaysians have for them.

Its information chief Abdul Rahman Sulaiman said Apec leaders attending the summit should keep to economic discussions and not digress on other matters as did Gore and the US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

The DAP Member of Parliament for Kepong Dr Tan Seng Giaw, while reminding the US to be more respectful of their host, also urged the government to be extra cautious in accepting US aid.

At the same time he also urged the government to constantly be transparent particular in matters relating to Anwar's trial so as not to give outsiders any opportunity to criticise and interfere in Malaysia's internal affairs.

Anwar, who is being remanded in the Sungai Buloh prison, is being charged with four counts of corrupt practice and his trial will resume on Nov 23.

In KUALA TERENGGANU, the council of Menteris Besar and Chief Ministers expressed regret over some foreign leaders attending the Kuala Lumpur Apec summit interfering in Malaysia's internal affairs.

Council chairman Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad said this only reflected on the lack of finesse the part of the foreign leaders in diplomacy and international relations besides their cultural insensitivities.

"We also object to statements by the foreign leaders questioning the integrity and dignity of Malaysia's judicial system and their misconceptions that Malaysia ignores the rule of law," said Wan Mokhtar, who is also Terengganu Menteri Besar at a press conference here.

He said Gore's provocative remarks gave the impression that the US was also involved in creating Anwar's so-called movement for reform.

Wan Mokhtar emphasised that only Malaysians reserved the right to self-determination through the election process, the parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy already long in place.

In KOTA KINABALU, government backbencher Datuk Musa Aman (BN-Sungai Sibuga) who was debating a motion of confidence in Dr Mahathir's leadership and the government's handling of the financial crisis, also brought the House's attention to Gore's remarks.

"We're not a colony of the United States and they have no right to meddle in our domestic affairs," he said.

Musa said he took Gore's rude remarks and open support for Anwar's so-called movement for reform to mean that the US itself was bent on seeing anarchy taking place in Malaysia so as to give them the excuse for interfering.

The motion, tabled by Chief Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok on the second day of the State Legislative Assembly sitting and later unanimously passed, expressed the House's appreciation of Dr Mahathir's perseverance in facing current tribulations.

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said the party was very disappointed with Gore's statement which he said was very typical among the arrogant American administrators who took it upon themselves to be "policemen of the world".

"We have nothing against the US people but the ill-mannered, irresponsible, unethical and arrogant attitude of US administrators is not appreciated in our country," he told reporters here.

Dr Lim, who is Primary Industries Minister, said US leaders, with the help of the foreign media were trying to create bad image for Malaysia to prevent investment flow into the country.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said that Gore is a shameful example of America.

"It (the statement) was very arrogant that would make you think that he has never been taught manners, by his parents, his church or his school," he said.

Dr Ling said he felt very sorry for the US people if the way Gore behaved last night was reflective of the American people's attitude and upbringing.

"But I don't think this is reflective of the American people in general. I have been to US and in my opinion the Americans are not like that at all," he said.

President of the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry Malaysia (NCCIM) Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli in condemning Gore's speech, said it was clearly a reflection of bad breeding and manners.

"The US should remind itself that it is not the only upholder of morality and democracy in this world," he said in a statement.

"It also shows clearly that instead of forging understanding, tolerance and goodwill among APEC members, the US is festering the seed of distrust, enmity and disunity," he said.

Consumers International Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific S. Josie said Gore's conduct at last night's dinner was culturally and ethically unacceptable.

"We were appalled and shocked that a US government leader has come to Malaysia to insult, belittle and interfere in the most shocking manner," she said.

Deputy president of the Malaysian Malay Chamber of Commerce Syed Amin Al-Jeffri said Gore's remarks were that of a typical "mighty American at work using his power at whim and fancy to bulldoze at anything irrespective of where and when".

"But truly peace-loving Malaysians are totally rejecting the US' arrogance as only we know best who should lead us," he said.

Fomca (Federation of Malaysian Consumers' Associations) president Prof Hamdan Adnan expressed regret that Gore's expressedly open support for the so-called movement for reforms was improper given that the movement promoted street violence.

He said the US interference in Malaysia's internal affairs tend to reinforce convictions that Anwar was allegedly used by the CIA.

Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM) president Dr Syed Husin Ali said Gore did not have the moral right to preach democracy and human rights, after the US had caused so much deaths and sufferings, especially among innocent children in many Third World countries.

"Leaders of governments and ordinary citizens have the right to express their views on conditions prevailing in countries other than their own but change in any country, including Malaysia, must essentially be determined by its own people," Syed Husin said.

IN KUCHING, Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud said the Gore's statement was the most irresponsible made by a US top government leader on Malaysia in a forum where the US was supposed to lead in forging close cooperation.

"I think this statement shows either a complete disdain of the US government to truth in its dealing with us or it shows an intimidating attitude towards a small country like ours" he said.

Abdul Taib said this when winding up debate on the 1999 State budget at the State Legislative Assembly tabled by Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Amar Dr George Chan last Nov 6.

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