

20 NOV 1998

Gore-Reaction

MALAYSIANS CONTINUE TO LAMBAST GORE OVER SPEECH

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 20 (Bernama) -- Malaysians continue to criticize US Vice President Al Gore for interfering in Malaysia's internal affairs in his speech at an Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) business dinner here on Monday night.

Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Chairman Tan Sri Dr Noordin Sopiee described Gore's speech as "unadulterated kindergarten stuff".

"A mediocre first-year political science student would be able to match the sophistication," he said in a statement here today.

In his dinner speech, Gore had called demonstrators supporting former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim as "brave" and he behaved rudely by leaving the function immediately after his speech.

Noordin said he believed the speech was not for the benefit of the Malaysian people but that it was "so cynically, so blatantly, for the benefit of presidential hopeful Al Gore".

"It would seem that nothing less than a specific, calculated insult to Malaysia in terms of word and action would do if Gore is to reap sufficient capital for the run for the US Presidency on which he has already embarked," he said.

Noordin, a member of the dinner organising committee, recalled several events prior to the Apec business dinner which showed American arrogance and rudeness to the host.

Among them were:

- + the American delegation had specifically agreed and given an undertaking that after speaking, Gore would go through the first course before leaving but instead he rudely left immediately after making the speech,

- + Gore refused to enter the dining hall before Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, as would be the the order of precedence.

A former top police officer Datuk Seri Yuen Yuet Leng said Gore should not talk about human rights when the US was also on the human rights violators list of the world.

He applauded Dr Mahathir for not only for speaking on issues at the right time and proper forum internationally, but "above all, for not preaching or encouraging violence to topple other governments".

Malaysian Malay Journalists Association (PJM) President Yazid Othman said in a statement here today that Gore and US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright were under such severe political pressure involving President Bill Clinton's sex scandal that they were unable to note the suitable content of their speeches.

PJM said the perception that the US was fighting terrorism in the world and a promoter of democracy was false.

"The proof is that the US has never taken Israel to task for its terrorist acts against Palestine... while in Malaysia, the US supported a movement that has gone rioting in trying to topple a democratically elected government," Yazid said.

In Kuantan, Pahang Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob suggested that US Ambassador to Malaysia John Mallot be summoned to find out if he had been giving one-sided briefings about the situation in Malaysia to US leaders.

"Gore and Albright came to Malaysia intent on making provocative

statements. No leader from any country should make a stand supporting demonstrations and violence," he said.

Khalil said he was proud of Dr Mahathir, who as host of the Apec meeting, had stayed above it all despite being provoked.

Johor Umno Youth called on Malaysians to be wary and be ready to face challenges and foreign interference, especially the US, in Malaysian affairs.

In a statement here today, its Information chief Mohamed Abdul Latif Endot said Gore's arrogance, rudeness and misplaced concerns were clear signals that the US would not hesitate to interfere in Malaysia's domestic affairs.

He said the US, with its military might, wealth and control of the international media, would use all means and cronies in trying to "colonise" Malaysia.

He added that instead of becoming a world leader, the US had turned into a world bully.

-- BERNAMA  
APG AHH THG