

17/10/1998

`Malaysia has never meddled in affairs of other countries'

Azran Aziz; Jason Gerald

PEKAN, Fri. - Malaysia has never interfered in other countries' domestic affairs and will continue to adhere to this principle, Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today.

He said the Government respected the legal process and judiciary system and hoped other countries would do the same.

"There are times when we are disappointed with the court rulings made, but we accept them as we respect the system," he said after a closed-door briefing for Pekan Umno members on current issues.

Najib, who is Education Minister and Pekan Umno chief, said he hoped other Asean leaders would accept this fact and that the present issue (pertaining to the sacking of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim) was Malaysia's internal affair.

"Foreign leaders should recognise the fact that Malaysia practises a just system. Our's is an open system," he said, noting that Anwar's trial would be followed by millions of people worldwide.

"There is transparency in the courts and as such, there is no reason to doubt their worthiness and fairness."

Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob, meanwhile, commented on the statements by Indonesian President B.J. Habibie and Philippine President Joseph Estrada who had voiced concern over the political situation in Malaysia following Anwar's sacking and detention.

He said if any Government leader made a comment, it was very hard to differentiate whether it was personal or official in nature.

"Usually the official and personnel support, if made by a government leader, is the same. These two cannot be separated by saying that some comments are personal and some are official," he said.

"According to the diplomatic language, statements by the two Asean leaders constitute interference into the internal affairs of a fellow Asean member country."

Foreign news agencies have quoted Estrada as saying in Batam, Indonesia, two days ago that Anwar was an "honest, dedicated and intelligent public servant" and should be placed under house arrest, pending his trial, instead of being treated like a common criminal.

Estrada, who regarded Anwar as a close friend, said he was expressing his personal views and might write a personal letter to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for Anwar's release.

(END)