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Philippines satisfied with Anwar's trial so far

THE Philippines has expressed satisfaction that the corruption trial involving Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has so far being carried out in a fair manner.

Its Foreign Secretary Domingo Siazon said: "It looks all right. So far so good ... the due process is what is being asked for, nothing more," he said when briefing reporters on a bilateral meeting between President Joseph Estrada and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Palace of the Golden Horses.

He was earlier asked why Estrada, who had commented several times on the treatment of the former Deputy Prime Minister, did not take the opportunity to personally convey his concerns to Dr Mahathir during the meeting.

Siazon said Estrada's decision not to raise the matter did not mean that he was no longer concerned with Anwar's well-being.

"He is always concerned, but those of you who are here would have seen daily reports on the trial. This means there is greater transparency in the trial."

He said the Malaysian Government had also allowed foreign observers to follow the trial, citing as example the three Philippine congressmen who attended the trial on their personal capacity.

Siazon said Estrada had made it known many times that his remarks on Anwar was his personal views, thus he saw no reason to raise them at the meeting with Dr Mahathir.

"You also have to look at the context of when the views were first made, which is after Anwar appeared in public for the first time after his arrest with a black eye following a beating while in detention.

"After that, he was released from detention under the Internal Security Act, which was an improvement itself. Also, Dr Mahathir said that an investigation into the alleged beating has been initiated."

On whether Estrada would be meeting Anwar's wife, Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Siazon hinted of no such plans.

"The president is here on official visit, so he will have official functions."

On the meeting with Dr Mahathir, Siazon said both leaders discussed, among others, the financial crisis, the tension in the Spratly Islands and the situation in Indonesia.

On the latter, Siazon said both leaders expressed hope that any political change in the country would be carried out peacefully.

"Dr Mahathir also explained the capital controls introduced by his government, expressing his belief that it would work for Malaysia. At least with the measures, Malaysia is in control of its exchange and interest rates."

Siazon said following Dr Mahathir's explanation on the currency controls, the Philippines now had a better understanding of the matter, including the need to have some kind of global regulation and supervision on currency tradings and hedge funds operations.

He said Estrada also congratulated Dr Mahathir on Malaysia's rapid infrastructure and economic development, and stressed the importance for economic cooperation be intensified between the two countries.

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