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`Questions on Anwar's case an interference'

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Malaysia will regard any question raised on the arrest and trial of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim at the Apec Leaders Summit here next week as an interference in its internal affairs, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said today.

"I cannot imagine how, if the Apec summit was being held in Washington, if (US President Bill) Clinton was asked about his affair with Monica (Lewinsky).

"People must give due deference to what the Apec summit stands for ... without having to divert attention to the country's internal matters," she said when asked what would Malaysia's reaction be if Apec leaders brought up Anwar's issue.

It has been a matter of debate whether some Apec leaders, which will meet in Kuala Lumpur from Nov 17 to Nov 18, would bring up Anwar's issue at the summit.

Speaking to reporters after launching the Apec International Media Centre at the Mines Exhibition Centre, Rafidah said the issue "has got nothing to do with Apec and more so, it is a very internal matter."

To the possibility that some leaders may choose to raise the issue at the summit, she said: "I do not think there is time for anybody to discuss at length what is already on the Apec summit agenda."

Asked what if leaders sought to bring up the issue at bilateral meetings with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Rafidah said:

"Again, we do not expect the Prime Minister to ask Clinton, `So how is Monica?'"

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