

11 JAN 1998

Anwar-Cohen

US ASSURES ASIA OF SUPPORT TO OVERCOME ECONOMIC WOES

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 11 (Bernama) -- The United States has reassured Malaysia and other Asian countries of its support in overcoming their economic woes.

This was conveyed to Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim by visiting US Defence Secretary William Cohen at their brief meeting here today.

Briefing reporters on the discussion, Under-Secretary for Southeast Asia and South Pacific Mohamed Arshad Hussain said Cohen told Anwar that there was a keenness on the part of the US to see the economic problem confronting some Asian countries settled.

"There was a general discussion on this but not specifically on Malaysia", Arshad said.

Cohen arrived here today at the start of an 11-day Asian tour which will also take him to Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, China, Japan and South Korea.

Arshad said Anwar told Cohen that Malaysia had no intention of seeking the assistance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in overcoming its economic problem.

Anwar also told Cohen that he had invited US Deputy Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers to Malaysia to find out what the IMF was doing in bailing out the economies of other Asian countries affected by the financial crisis.

On Anwar's discussion with Thai Deputy Foreign Minister Dr M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra, Arshad said Sukhumbhand handed Anwar a letter from Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Arshad, however, could not say what the letter was about.

Sukhumbhand also called for more cooperation between Thailand and Malaysia to overcome the economic problem faced by the two countries.

Arshad said Sukhumbhand informed Anwar that the Thailand-Malaysia ties needed to be strengthened.

Sukhumbhand also said that there were obstacles in border demarcation and cross-border problems which needed to be resolved, he added.

To this, Anwar told Sukhumbhand that most of the problems concerning border demarcation had been resolved except along the Kelantan-Thailand border.

Anwar said any problem in Malaysia-Thailand relations could be settled through the Malaysia-Thailand Joint Committee Meeting.

Anwar also said that it was grossly unfair and unjust to make allegations that Malaysia had been used as a training ground for Thai Muslim separatists.

Arshad said Anwar informed Sukhumbhand that if Thailand had evidence on the matter, Kuala Lumpur was willing to investigate.

Sukhumbhand also called for increased cooperation under the Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand - Growth Triangle (IMT-GT). -- BERNAMA

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