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Call for non-interference policy

Hamisah Hamid

MALAYSIA wants foreign embassies and high commissions in the country to observe a non-interference policy with regards to local politics rather than taking a confrontational approach.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Wisma Putra will not go beyond reminding relevant embassies not to interfere in the country's domestic politics.

"In country to country relations, what we do is that we make statement, we give warning. That is already sufficient," he told a news conference after opening a seminar on "The Criteria For A Country Based On Islamic Principles" in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Syed Hamid said this when asked about Wisma Putra's move on the allegation that foreign embassies gave financial assistance to the opposition in the just concluded general elections.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had earlier said that if it is proven that such a thing occurred, it showed foreign interference in the internal affairs of Malaysia.

However, he said currently there is no law to prevent political parties from receiving foreign assistance.

A few days after the nomination day, amid campaigns by the political parties to garner the voters support, a Malay newspaper had front-paged Umno Youth exco member Abdul Azim Zabidi revealing attempts by several embassies and high commissions to fund the opposition parties and non-governmental organisations for the general elections.

Abdul Azim said senior officials from the Canadian, British and Australian High Commissions, and the US Embassy had been "active" in meeting politicians and attending ceramah and press conferences held by the opposition.

Several leaders from Barisan Nasional component parties objected the foreign embassies' moves and called on the Government to take action if the case is proven.

Deputy Home Minister Datuk Azmi Khalid later said that initial feedback from the monitoring done by the Government, indicated some truth to the claims.

He said that the Government could ask any foreigner to leave if there is evidence of breach of ethics in relations between countries. The Canadian, Australian and British high commissions, and the US Embassy have denied the allegations.

On another development, Syed Hamid urged the Malays not to consider Pas as an alternative to Umno.

Syed Hamid, who is an Umno Supreme Council member, feared that the worst would happen if the Malays started to see Pas as an alternative to Umno.

"We (the Malays) should know about the consequences. Pas is not an alternative ... we should never allow it to happen," he said.

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