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US think-tank `had ties with Anwar'

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - A US-based think-tank which took part in a United States Congressional Sub-Committee hearing on Malaysia in Washington D.C. yesterday has known ties with former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

During the 1 1/2-hour hearing themed "Malaysia: Assessing the Mahathir Agenda", Douglas Paal, president of the Asia Pacific Policy Centre, recommended to members of Congress that the US maintain a correct but cool relationship with the Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad Government.

The Centre was established in 1993 and seeks closer ties between US business and political leaders and their counterparts in the Asia Pacific region.

Since 1994, the Centre has held four Pacific dialogues in Malaysia. The Centre's website lists Anwar as the dialogues' patron.

The dialogues were co-sponsored by the Centre, in conjunction with the Institute of Policy Research (IKD), a known Anwar think-tank, and the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (Isis).

During the fourth dialogue, held from Jan 11 to 13 last year, Anwar and US Defence Secretary William S. Cohen co-chaired the first session, while Anwar and former US State Secretary Dr Henry Kissinger, co-chaired the second.

Paal is the former National Security Council's Asian Affairs senior director, and was also a former NSC special assistant under the Bush and Reagan Administrations.

Paal was one of three witnesses who answered questions on Malaysia from the members of the sub-committee. The others were Ralph Boyce, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, and Dr Linda Lim, a Singaporean teaching at the University of Michigan Business School.

Bernamea reported that Lim, who holds degrees in economics from the Universities of Cambridge, Yale and Michigan, repeatedly downplayed the role that currency and capital control measures played in Malaysia's economic recovery.

Lim is also the founder and editor of the Journal of Asian Business, and has consulted for US companies, private think-tanks, United Nations agencies, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Malaysia's Ambassador to the US Datuk Ghazzali Sheikh Khalid had called the experts "blatantly biased and ill-informed."

He said Paal's views were compromised by the fact that his Centre had collaborated with Anwar and had benefited from donations from Anwar and his associates.

As for Lim, Ghazzali said: "She does not seem to appreciate the circumstances under which capital controls were put in place in Malaysia and the positive impact it had on our economic recovery."

In his presidential address at the opening of the Umno general assembly today, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad read out the report and regretted that Malaysia was not even given the opportunity to defend itself against overseas campaign to smear the country.

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