

01/05/1999

Wan Azizah rapped for trying to solicit foreign support

ALOR STAR, Fri. - Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail's visit to the Philippines to seek foreign intervention in Malaysian issues has given the appearance that foreigners should interfere in domestic affairs.

"We thought that our country is free and independent and Malaysians will determine the fate of the Malaysian people themselves," the Prime Minister said today, "but we find that they are keen to get support from foreign countries."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was speaking to reporters on arrival at the Sultan Abdul Halim Airport, here for a three-day visit to Kedah.

He disclosed this when asked to comment on the visit by the wife of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to Manila yesterday to seek political support from the Philippines.

Barisan Nasional and Umno will not seek foreign help, Dr Mahathir said. "We believe in the people of Malaysia," he said. "Only Malaysians have the right to determine the fate of the Malaysian people."

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had never interfered in the internal affairs of other countries.

"On the contrary, if we want to intervene in the problems in the Philippines, there are many Filipinos seeking Malaysian help.

"But we don't want to meddle in the domestic affairs of other people," he said.

Asked whether the Philippines' acceptance of the visit by Dr Wan Azizah would affect Asean co-operation, Dr Mahathir said it was up to the Philippines.

On Dr Wan Azizah's claim that her husband was a victim of the Malaysian judicial process, Dr Mahathir said Dr Wan Azizah had the right to speak while the Government had the right to deny it.

Commenting on the same issue, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the support Dr Wan Azizah and Parti Keadilan Nasional get from the people cannot be regarded as "people power".

"Umno and Barisan Nasional are the real symbols of people power," he told reporters after opening the Pokok Sena Umno division delegates meeting here.

Abdullah was commenting on Azizah's speech at a Rotary Club function in Manila yesterday that the people's support for her and Keadilan was the Malaysian version of "people power" that swept former Philippine president Corazon Aquino to power in 1986. Dr Wan Azizah is Keadilan president.

Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak dismissed Dr Wan Azizah's comparison of Dr Mahathir's leadership with former Philippines president, the late Ferdinand Marcos.

"She has gone overboard," he told reporters after officiating the Padang Serai Umno division meeting in Sekolah Menengah Kuala Ketil II near here. "Dr Mahathir has done so many good things for Malaysia. How can one compare Dr Mahathir with Marcos?"

In Sungai Petani, Umno Youth acting chief Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein questioned Dr Wan Azizah's motive for attacking the Malaysian leadership in a foreign country.

He said it was irresponsible of the Philippines Government to entertain that kind of statements, knowing it had a political agenda.

Hishammuddin said when Marcos was ousted by the "People's Power", its people did not go around seeking support from other countries.

In Kuala Lumpur, Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman said any attempt to equate the present conditions in Malaysia with those under Marcos' rule should be condemned.

"It is totally wrong to make the comparison," she said. "We have a plural society that values stability, unity and tolerance. This was totally the opposite under Marcos."

In Kuantan, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Khalil Yaakob said diplomatic relations between Malaysia and the Philippines might be affected if the Philippine's Government shows support for Dr Azizah.

As an Asean member, the Philippines Government should not interfere in Malaysian affairs, he said.

(END)