

PKR leader lauds Erdogan's Muslim democracy
MalaysiaKini.com
February 5, 2012
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Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Anwar Ibrahim are ideological allies who try to get together as often as they can.

In the last four weeks, both have sought each other's company twice, the first when Anwar flew to Istanbul via Bombay after his acquittal on a charge of sodomy on Jan 9.

On Friday, the two leaders got together again in Istanbul, at the Dolmabache Palace which lies on the European coastline of the Bosphorus, the sea that separates Europe and Asia.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan storms out of Davos. The Malaysian opposition leader and his wife, Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, the president of PKR, had a private chat with Erdogan during which Anwar urged the Turkish leader to continue supporting the Arab Spring, and push for sanctions against Syria while keeping the rights of the Palestinians on the front burner.

In centuries past, Istanbul was on the fault line between contending cultures and civilisations, notably Christian and Islamic ones.

Through Anwar and Erdogan's collaboration, the search for consonances between hitherto contending cultures and civilisations would be emphasised.

Yesterday, Anwar held forth on the theme to an audience of Turkish civil servants and politicians from Erdogan's party at Dolmabache Palace.

His aim was to fortify them in the belief that Islam is compatible with what the thinker Francis Fukuyama had predicted after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 as the spirit of the times: liberal democracy.

It's a tough act to bring off, there having been no resilient democratic governance in the Muslim world until the Turks put Erdogan and his Justice and Welfare Party in power and Suharto's overthrow brought the democracy-favouring Abdulrahman Wahid and Bambang Yudhoyono to power in Indonesia.

Under Erdogan's premiership, constitutional reforms in Turkey to expand the rights of women and the minorities, and the continuance of democratic reform in Indonesia have strengthened the hope that Muslim-dominant polities need not wind up being despotic and corrupt.

Transition to democracy irreversible

In his speech at Dolmabache Palace on the theme of 'Democracy and Islam', Anwar praised Erdogan's leadership which he claimed advanced the cause of constitutional democracy in the Muslim world.

"Justice is highly valued in Islam and any Muslim-majority state that adheres to the rule of law cannot but incorporate this value in its governance," said Anwar.

"If the legitimacy of a ruler is derived from the people, then the justness of that rule is of paramount importance," he claimed.

Anwar said the era of one-man and one-party rule is irrevocably over in the Muslim world.

"The transition to constitutional democracy is irreversible. The countries in the Islamic crescent from the Mediterranean to the Bosphorus must embrace this transition or be swept aside by this great awakening,"

he claimed.

anwar wan azizah and turkey finance minister Mehmet Simsek He predicted that Southeast Asia, where he said there were still holdouts against the currents sweeping the Arab world, would soon join the deluge.

“It’s just a matter of time before the torrents of the Arab Spring would be loosed on Southeast Asia. More dynasties and autocracies of old will be swept away and in their place new found freedoms and democracies will spring forth,” said Anwar.

Also present in the PKR delegation, which called on the Turkish foreign and finance ministers for briefings, were deputy president Azmin Ali and secretary-general Saifuddin Nasution.

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