

Japan kept Anwar out due to prior conviction

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PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim was denied entry into Japan last Sunday because he had been convicted of corrupt practice in Malaysia in 1999.

English-language daily The Star quoted Japanese Embassy spokesperson Tomoko Nagai as saying that the country would typically refuse entry to any person with a prior conviction in Japan or any other country, and who had been jailed for a year or more.

This is stipulated in Japan's Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, she said.

Anwar was convicted of corruption in 1999, for interfering with police investigations into claims of sexual misconduct against him

"As we know, Anwar was allowed to enter Japan in 2011 and 2012, but during (that) period, he had special permission from the country," the spokesperson reportedly said.

"This time, however, he did not request for the special permission, and as such was not allowed to enter the country."

However, PKR communications chief Fahmi Fadzil (above), when contacted, said that Anwar's staff had checked with the embassy prior to the trip and received an all clear.

"Anwar's political secretary made the call to the Japanese Embassy in Kuala Lumpur and also to the Japanese Foreign Ministry to explicitly find out if a formal application needed to be made.

"In both inquiries, Anwar's office was told there was no need for any formal application," he told Malaysiakini.

He also denied that there could have been a mix up involving Anwar's staff.

Anwar had arrived at Narita Airport early on Sunday morning.

When refused entry into the country, he had to board the first flight out that morning on threat of deportation.

He had travelled to Japan to present a paper for the Nippon Foundation. He said that his office had checked with the Japanese Embassy for travel requirements and was not informed of any likely hindrance.

Anwar then accused the Putrajaya of having a hidden hand in the matter but Foreign Affairs Minister Anifah Aman (left) rubbished this, saying that it could have happened because Japan has a right to deny entry to any person they considered "undesirable."

'Anifah wrong'

Meanwhile, PKR veep and lawyer N Surendran countered that Anifah was wrong to wash his hands off the matter.

Calling Anwar "our country's federal opposition leader," Surendran said the entry denial was of grave concern and had insulted Malaysia.

"The BN government is duty-bound to pursue the matter vigorously with the Japanese government. Japan must be asked to reverse the entry refusal and apologise for their actions, which is a slap in the face of our country," the MP for Padang Serai said in a statement.

Irrespective of political differences, Surendran urged the government to defend a "citizen" and also raised an issue with Anifah's claim that perhaps Japan had considered Anwar an "undesirable" individual.

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