

COURTESY CALL

DON'T DEFLECT ATTENTION FROM REE THEFT, PM TELLS SANUSI

Audience with Kedah sultan last year had nothing to do with rare earth element mining

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said caretaker Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Muhammad Sanusi Md Nor should not deflect attention from the rare earth element (REE) theft issue by playing up the former's audience with the sultan of Kedah last year.

Anwar said his audience with Sultan of Kedah Al-Aminul Karim Sultan Sallehuddin Sultan Badlishah had nothing to do with REE mining.

"The sultan of Kedah had summoned me for other matters, including visiting the royal mausoleum, and it was in accordance with His Majesty's schedule.

"It was me and a friend paying a courtesy call on the sultan of

Kedah and it was not related to REE mining.

"The true issue here is about the REE theft... do not deflect. It is about giving approval to a Chinese company without consent.

"The issue is, if he did indeed apply (to mine), it was not with the sultan of Kedah and there was no submission to His Majesty," he said after launching the 2023 Malaysia Commercialisation Year Summit here yesterday.

Anwar said he would refrain from speaking more on the royal audience as it involved the sultan of Kedah.

Two days ago, Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail confirmed that Anwar and Indonesian tycoon Mohammad Reza Chalid had an audience with the sultan of Kedah.

However, he said, Reza was just accompanying Anwar for the audience and there was no discussion on REE mining.

Saifuddin said Sanusi was not present at the palace and the submission of an application for REE mining did not arise.

Saifuddin had also produced a photograph of Sanusi allegedly visiting the Bukit Enggang Forest Reserve in Sik on Feb 19.

The photograph proved that Sanusi had known about the REE theft, claimed Saifuddin.



An allegedly illegal rare earth element processing laboratory in the Bukit Enggang Forest Reserve in Sik.
FILE PIC

On Thursday in Penang, Saifuddin had slammed Sanusi for claiming that there was no case to be made against him over the REE issue.

Sanusi, who is Perikatan Nasional election director, had argued that this was why the matter had yet to go to court, and that Saifuddin was using political rallies to develop a negative perception of him.

Saifuddin said it was not Sanusi's place to say that there was no evidence.

"Who is he to say there is no evidence? The evidence will be investigated by the enforcement agencies and action has been taken. Investigations are ongoing.

"This is denial by someone who is pressed when I reveal one evidence after another that the REE theft did happen," said Saifuddin.

He said the Forestry and the

Immigration Departments had opened investigations, revealing the involvement of foreigners, and arrests, prosecutions and convictions had been made.

Saifuddin also told PN leaders not to "play victim" if they face action for stirring up race, religion and royalty (3R) issues during state election campaigns.

He said the police and the Malay rulers had issued repeated reminders against playing up such issues during campaigning.

"Malays have *adab* (manners), especially when it involves the royal institution.

"So, when police take action, their reaction is to 'play victim', such as in the case of Sanusi, who clearly uttered words that insulted the sultan of Selangor.

"So, again, I reiterate. Refrain from touching on issues where reminders have been issued repeatedly by the authorities and

the royal institution."

He said PN chairman Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's action of touching on 3R issues during a programme in Kapar, Selangor, had been identified as a high-profile case.

"There was an incident that we consider high-profile as it came from Muhyiddin during a speech in Kapar a few days ago. The issue had to do with a court ruling on the use of the word 'Allah'.

"The sultan of Selangor had, before this, ruled that the issue is not to be debated until it is discussed by the Conference of Rulers. However, Muhyiddin failed to adhere to the wishes of the sultan of Selangor, who is also chairman of the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs.

"The people can judge this. If His Majesty's advice can be ignored, who else will they also ignore?"