

'Foreign Ministry helped Anwar re- enter Japan'

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KUALA LUMPUR: Contrary to claims of “hidden hands”, the Foreign Ministry said it had helped Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim re-enter Japan on Feb 26, after him being barred entry on Jan 19, the Dewan Rakyat heard today.

Deputy Foreign Minister Hamzah Zainudin said if claims of “hidden hands” having blocked Anwar’s initial visit to Japan was true, then the PKR de facto chief would not have been allowed entry into Japan the following month.

“The hidden hands never existed. If it was true, we would have done it [blocked Anwar] again on Feb 26. But it was clear that not only did the government not interfere, but we helped Anwar.

“And our help made it possible for the Opposition Leader to enter Japan. So next time, if you want to enter Japan, write a letter like you (Anwar) did on Feb 26,” said Hamzah during the question session in Parliament this morning.

Hamzah was responding to a question from Shamsul Iskandar (PKR-Bukit Katil) on the ministry’s role in preventing an individual or political figure from entering a foreign country.

The deputy foreign minister explained that when the ministry learnt of Anwar wanting to re-enter Japan on Feb 26, his staff took extra measures to ensure his entry was possible, this included calling the Japanese embassy every day.

“When (Anwar) received another invitation (from Japan), we called them (Japanese embassy) every day because the Opposition Leader is a magnificent person. We want him to go to Japan, give good speeches, and protect the country’s image,” said Hamzah with sarcasm.

“This is why we helped him and called the embassy to ask whether they had received the letter. They said they had, so we asked them to ensure it was approved as soon as possible. The embassy then advised us that they had forwarded the letter to the Japanese immigration.

“Ultimately, (Anwar) was able to go again. That was the help the government had given him through the foreign ministry.”

He explained that Anwar had been deported on Jan 19 due to the latter’s previous criminal conviction, not because the government had leaked a secret report to Japan.

Hamzah stressed that as an “ordinary citizen”, Anwar was no longer protected by the diplomatic immunity he once held as the deputy prime minister, Anwar should have sought the foreign ministry’s assistance to obtain a special visa, added the deputy minister.

“Ordinary citizens, including the Opposition Leader, next time when you want to go to that country, inform the foreign ministry, we will help.

“Instead, you (Anwar) were barred, did not inform us, came back to Malaysia, held a press conference and accused the foreign ministry of all sorts of things,” sniped Hamzah.

“How could we have helped you then, when you had already returned to Malaysia?” he demanded.

Thank you but stop misleading

Anwar, upon hearing Hamzah’s response, thanked the ministry for its cooperation in helping him to visit and enter Japan.

But he was quick to rebut that he had not received any “special approval” to re-enter Japan a second time, nor had he made a written application to the foreign ministry.

“You are misleading the House, I did not fill any form, I just informed Japan that I wanted to visit again, and they approved it unconditionally. I was welcomed and the Japanese foreign minister apologised to me.

“If our foreign ministry says it extended its cooperation, I thank you. But don’t try to mislead everyone by saying a special request was made. That is a lie. There was no special approval from Japan’s foreign ministry,” said Anwar.

He added that Hamzah’s alleged attempt to deceive the public was typical “Umno-BN behaviour”.

Hamzah responded by saying that he had no reason to lie to the House and all information supplied had been based on a letter from the Japanese embassy.

“This has nothing to do with Umno. Everything I have said is based on an explanation given to the foreign ministry from the Japanese embassy. That is what I have read and explained to the rakyat.

“We, from Umno or BN, when we say something, we do it. Not like some people, who say they want to do something, but don’t,” Hamzah shot back.

“Why would I lie to the House? I am not the type of person who lies, who says one thing, but does another thing.”

Anwar had in January speculated that “hidden hands” were behind his barred entry to Japan, and his party had questioned whether BN had played a role in the denied entry.

Japan had later explained that their immigration officials turned Anwar away because he did not have a visa. The visa is necessary for persons who have a previous criminal record.

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