

Japanese forum organiser apologises in person to Anwar over entry ban
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A private non-profit organisation has apologised to opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim over the incident when the politician was barred from entry into Japan last month.

Forum organiser Sasakawa Peace Foundation chairman Jiro Hanyu flew down to Kuala Lumpur to meet Anwar and take responsibility for the hiccup.

"But I am the host. I should be responsible for the guest," said Hanyu in a press conference today in Petaling Jaya.

"For that uncomfortable situation, I'm responsible for the greater embarrassment made to Datuk Seri Anwar."

Hanyu admitted that as the host of the forum, the foundation should have ensured that the event had proceeded smoothly.

Anwar was invited to Japan to present a paper on Muslim democrats after receiving a personal invite from the chairman of the Nippon Foundation, Tan Sri Yohei Sasakawa.

He was barred by the Japanese immigration department on January 19 due to his previous conviction for sodomy in 1999.

The Permatang Pauh MP had argued that the excuse given by the Japanese authorities was not valid since he had managed to visit Tokyo thrice in 2006, 2009 and 2012.

He had also questioned if Wisma Putra had been involved in ensuring that he was not allowed into Japan.

In response, the foundation said that they had contacted the Japanese foreign ministry and legal authorities.

"Up till the present moment, I'm not satisfied with their explanation," said Hanyu.

The foundation had also asked the Japanese government to conduct a proper investigation and inquiry into the matter.

"If it is found that it is their fault, then an apology has to be made to Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim," Hanyu added.

Meanwhile, Anwar said that he wants to put the entire episode behind him.

"I said, let's move on. It is just one experience."

The politician has accepted another invitation by the foundation to visit Tokyo and present his paper on February 26.

The Star had previously quoted Japan embassy spokesperson Tomoko Nagai as saying that the country would deny entry to anyone who have had a prior conviction in Japan or any other country, and have had been jailed for a year or more.

"This time, however, he (Anwar) did not request for special permission. And as such was not allowed to enter the country," Nagai had said.

It is unknown if Anwar would be able to gain entry into Japan this time around although the foundation has assured that it would do its best to ensure that all goes smoothly. – February 10, 2014.

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