

28 JAN 1997

Anwar-Logs

ACA DIRECTED TO HELP PROBE INTO ALLEGED LOG SMUGGLING

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 28 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim today directed the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) to help the investigation into alleged log smuggling in Sabah.

He also told all quarters involved in the issue not to make any public statement on it until the committee formed to conduct the investigation had completed its task.

"It is not proper for Sabah leaders to hurl accusations or insults, and the same goes for federal leaders, so as to enable the investigation to proceed without disruption or comment which raises tension or problem," he told a news conference after chairing a meeting of the National Council for Local Authorities here.

Anwar on Jan 20 ordered the investigation following the detention of the Port Klang registered "MV Able Helmsmen" by the Sabah Forestry Department on suspicion of attempting to export logs without approval.

The Sabah Cabinet formed a committee to investigate the allegations and a report on the findings was handed over to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad here today by a Sabah delegation headed by Chief Minister Datuk Yong Teck Lee.

A copy of the report was also given to Anwar.

The log smuggling case had become a hotly debated issue with Sabah Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Ghapur Salleh, who headed the state investigation committee, and Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik each giving different versions on reports of log smuggling.

Anwar said Dr Mahathir this morning asked him to act firmly regarding the investigation.

He said the Sabah Cabinet committee should take into account the views of federal agencies such as the Malaysian Timber Industry Board (MTIB) under the Primary Industries Ministry.

Anwar said the investigation was being coordinated by Treasury Deputy Secretary-General (Operation) Datuk Shahbuddin Imam Muhammad.

Shahbuddin would be responsible for preparing the overall report on the investigation, incorporating the state committee's report and the views of the state government, Forestry Department, Royal Customs and Excise Department, MTIB and all other relevant parties.

Asked whether those involved in the investigation could make statements on the issue, Anwar said: "They should not as any statements might complicate matters since the investigation is ongoing. Each department will have its own opinion and explanation. If you ask all the departments, all will be in the right, but the logs still go missing."

Anwar also asked the media to be fair and wait for the investigation to be completed before reporting on the case.

Asked when the investigation would be completed, he said: "I have asked for the investigation to be speeded up as there is no reason why it should be prolonged." -- BERNAMA

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