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MAS to drop RM80m civil suit against Kadir

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon.- Malaysia Airlines is to withdraw its RM80 million civil suit against Deputy Human Resource Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir over his remarks about the carrier's quality of service.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today that Malaysia Airlines chairman Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli had informed him of the development.

"Tajudin called me from London and said he would withdraw the letter sent to Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling (Liong Sik) and the civil suit against Datuk Kadir," said Anwar.

Anwar said he told Tajudin that the Government would continue to support the carrier's move to improve its services.

He hoped this marked the end of the dispute between MAS and the Transport Ministry, and that problems in future would be discussed between the parties concerned.

Earlier after briefing Barisan Nasional MPs on the 1998 Budget, Anwar acknowledged MAS' efforts.

But he added that the airline should appreciate constructive criticism from ministers and members of the administration as MAS' efforts to improve its services had the Government's backing.

"I think MAS has to recognise that the minister (Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik) and members of the administration have the right to offer constructive criticism."

Anwar said he had discussed the suit against Kadir with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir.

Malaysia Airlines filed an RM80 million suit against Kadir over an alleged defamatory statement he made in a newspaper article.

The airline claimed Abdul Kadir's remarks that the airline's standards of service had dropped, had affected its position as a well-known national and international carrier and that its reputation had been harmed.

Dr Ling's misunderstanding with the airline arose following his remarks on the need for it to take better care of its customers following complaints caused by the haze-induced closure of airports and rescheduling of flights.

Anwar also met Tajudin last Saturday and informed him that Dr Ling was merely conveying the Cabinet's views on problems faced by passengers due to flight cancellations when the haze was at its peak.

"Tajudin concurred with our view that the minister has the right to give advice," he said.

Anwar said the Government's position was quite clear in that the minister should be given the right to express his concerns because the haze experience was unprecedented.

"The matter has been thoroughly discussed by the Cabinet. Dr Ling conveyed it and we have to defend the right of the minister (to criticise)," said Anwar.

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