

01/10/1998

PM: Action to be taken if assault allegations are true

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said action would be taken against the police personnel concerned if Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's allegations that he was assaulted were found to be true.

One day after the police said that they would conduct full investigation into the allegations, the Prime Minister said that the Government would not tolerate any unlawful police action.

He firmly said that a full inquiry would be conducted into the former Deputy Prime Minister's assault allegations while under detention.

Dr Mahathir said: "The police cannot harm their detainees in the course of their interrogation. We can't accept this and we will undertake full investigations.

"Even though others may think that this was done by the police, we can't put the blame on them before we conduct a full probe into the matter," he added.

Dr Mahathir said this at a Press conference in his office in response to Anwar's allegations in the Sessions Court yesterday.

The Prime Minister said the matter should not disrupt the court process against his former deputy who was charged yesterday on nine counts namely five counts of corruption and four of sexual improprieties. Another charge on sexual impropriety, the tenth, was preferred in the magistrate's court today.

Anwar was sacked as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister on Sept 2 and expelled from Umno the following day.

Anwar, showing a bruised left eye when he appeared in public for the first time since his detention on Sept 20, told the court that he was punched and slapped by the police until his left eye bruised, his nose bled and his lips got cut.

Anwar led an illegal procession from the National Mosque here on Sept 20 to the Dataran Merdeka. He was later arrested under the Internal Security Act for threatening national security.

Dr Mahathir said: "We will definitely investigate. If the investigations show that the police harmed him (Anwar), action will be taken. This matter should not affect the due process of law where Anwar is answering charges in court."

He said the Attorney-General had ordered an inquiry into Anwar's allegations and it would be carried out by a special team of police officers not connected with the Special Branch to ensure the team's independence.

Asked how independent would the investigations be, Dr Mahathir said the policemen carrying out the inquiry are professionals and would want to prove their professionalism.

The Prime Minister said he failed to see how the police would benefit from hurting Anwar, especially when they were not expecting a confession because he was to be charged in court.

However, "we realise that Anwar seemed injured and we need to know why," Dr Mahathir said.

Asked whether the police had hurt Anwar because he had provoked members of the team investigating his case, Dr Mahathir said the possibility was there as Anwar himself had tried to cause a split in the police force.

When suggested that the team investigating Anwar's case disqualify themselves following his allegations yesterday, Dr Mahathir said: "In the

first place, we have to first determine who is responsible. How can we change (the investigating team) unless we know who or what was involved.

"But if you want to change en masse, then you are penalising people who are probably innocent. So, this inquiry is the first phase of the process to determine who's responsible, if indeed there is someone..."

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