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Tajol on why Anwar was held under ISA

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had no intention of seeing Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim detained under the Internal Security Act, but this changed 20 days after Anwar's sacking on Sept 2, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Tajol Rosli Ghazali said.

This showed Dr Mahathir exercised a high degree of fairness in treating Anwar.

"I believe Dr Mahathir did not want Anwar to be detained in prison, but be placed on bail, stay in his own house and face the court trial," he added.

But Anwar's alleged involvement in a demonstration on Sept 20 which led to the destruction of items at the Umno's gallery at the Putra World Trade Centre and the supporters' attempt to head for the Prime Minister's residence at Sri Perdana resulted in his arrest under the ISA.

"According to my sources, Anwar was even seen returning home that evening as a pillion rider on a motorcycle," he told Noh Omar (BN-Tanjung Karang) who sought clarification as to why Anwar was arrested long after he was sacked as the Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister.

Tajol Rosli said Anwar was to have been charged with criminal activities and not threatening national security then.

He reiterated that the ISA was not meant for criminal activities, but against those who threatened national security.

Tajol Rosli was interrupted incessantly by the Opposition and Government backbenchers when winding up points raised by MPs on the Home Ministry during debates on the Supply Bill, 1999.

To a clarification sought by Opposition leader Lim Kit Siang and MP for Tanjung that this year being declared "The Year of Human Rights" and that Malaysia's image was now a "black mark", Tajol Rosli said:

"Malaysia's image as a model country has been good all these years, but the demonstrations and illegal gatherings following Anwar's sacking affected the nation's image."

Tajol Rosli appealed to the people to respect the judiciary's independence and fairness and let the court decide Anwar's cases.

He also said that the Special Committee set up by the police to investigate Anwar's allegation that he was beaten up would submit its report to the Attorney-General.

"It is up to the A-G to decide what action to take," he added.

On allegations raised by MPs of police brutality, he said investigations would be carried out under the Criminal Procedure Code. "If there is concrete evidence against any police officer, disciplinary action can be taken against the person," he added.

He reiterated that ISA was used to protect national security and he believed in its application.

In a rare challenge to the Opposition, Tajol Rosli said: "As a responsible person in the Ministry and a man of principle...if I do not agree with the ISA and the principle of Barisan Nasional, I will resign as Deputy Minister.

"But as long as I am in the Ministry, I will carry out my duties according to the Ministry's policy. As a politician, one must have principles...failing which one will not earn the people's respect".

Tajol Rosli was asked by Lim Hock Seng (DAP-Bagan) whether a prisoner was allocated daily meals costing RM8.

"I am not sure, but at the detention depot of the Immigration Department, it is RM3 per day for each detainee," he said.

Tajol Rosli said the Government did not agree with suggestions by Mohd Sabu (Pas-Kubang Kerian) and Liew Ah Kim (Ind-Seputeh) to allow the people to carry out peaceful demonstrations. "Such demonstrations can turn unruly and can affect the peace enjoyed by the majority."

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