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Commission set up to probe Anwar injuries

Kamarul Yunus

AN independent commission of inquiry, chaired by former Chief Justice of Malaya Tan Sri Anuar Zainal Abidin, has been set up to investigate into the cause of the injuries inflicted on former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim while in police custody.

Announcing this yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the four-member commission would take over investigations from the police with immediate effect.

"With the formation of the commission, the police will stop all investigations into the assault," Dr Mahathir told newsmen after the weekly Cabinet meeting in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The other members in the commission are former Appeals Court judge Datuk Mahadev Shanker, Pantai Medical Centre's consultant orthopaedic surgeon Datuk Yeoh Poh Hong and former Attorney-General Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman. Dr Mahathir said Abu Talib would lead the investigation team into the allegations that police had assaulted Anwar while in their custody. However, the Prime Minister said there was no timeframe set for the commission to complete its investigations.

"There is no timeframe given but we hoped the investigations would be completed as soon as possible," he said. It is learnt that the commission would submit its findings directly to the Attorney-General Tan Sri Mohtar Abdullah.

The setting up of the commission followed the revelation by Mohtar on January 5 that the police were fully responsible for the injuries inflicted on Anwar.

Following the announcement, various quarters, including political parties and non-governmental organisations urged the Government to set up an independent inquiry to ensure that a thorough and fair investigation was carried out to punish those responsible for the crime.

Later, Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the commission will be an independent body, free to implement whatever is necessary in its investigation on the matter.

The Government is leaving it to the commission to work out the best manner of conducting the investigations on the cause of injuries inflicted on Anwar while in police custody, he added.

"We (the Government) will not assume any role in the investigations. We want the commission to be independent without any external pressure in carrying out its duties," he told reporters after attending a Hari Raya celebration at Desa Pandan, Kuala Lumpur, last night.

Abdullah said there is no time limit imposed on the commission in implementing its task as the Government has no desire of dictating its working time frame.

He noted that it will be up to the commission to hire any non-governmental organisation to assist in its investigation, as well as making its findings public.

"We only want the commission to carry out its tasks, and functions according to its terms of reference which has been decided earlier," Abdullah said.

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