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DAP-Commission

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY NEEDS ROYAL STATUS, SAYS DAP

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 28 (Bernama) -- The DAP has called on the government to ensure that the Commission of Inquiry to probe the injuries sustained by Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim while in police custody is a Royal Commission answerable only to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Parliament and the nation.

DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang said he was shocked at a report in an English daily today that the commission would submit its findings directly to Attorney-General Tan Sri Mohtar Abdullah.

"This is completely unacceptable. I call on the Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) or the Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to clarify and assure Malaysians and the world that the Commission of Inquiry into Anwar's 'black eye' is a Royal Commission of Inquiry answerable only to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Parliament and the nation and not subordinate or beholden in anyway to the Attorney-General," he said in a statement.

Lim, who is Opposition Leader, was reacting to the setting up of the four-member independent commission headed by former Chief Judge of Malaya Tan Sri Anuar Zainal Abidin to probe the alleged assault on Anwar.

Dr Mahathir announced yesterday the formation of the commission whose other members are former Court of Appeal Judge Datuk Mahadev Shankar, Pantai Medical Centre consultant orthopaedic surgeon Dr Yeoh Poh Hong and former Attorney-General Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman.

The commission was set up following Mohtar's statement on Jan 5 that investigations by a special police team showed that police were responsible for some of the injuries sustained by Anwar.

Lim said the commission should investigate the role of the Attorney-General in the past four months in the investigation of the "black eye" suffered by the former deputy prime minister.

It should find out why the Attorney-General had not been able to get to the bottom of the truth as to who were responsible for the assault of Anwar when in police custody, he said.

"The Attorney-General should be one of the witnesses who should be summoned to appear before the Commission of Inquiry to give evidence to help in its investigations.

"The Commission of Inquiry should not be submitting its report to the Attorney-General, but to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, and the report should be made public instantaneously of its submission to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong," he said.

It was then up to the Attorney-General to study the report of the commission to consider what actions should be taken by the Attorney-General's Chambers, he added.

The Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) welcomed the setting up of the commission, saying it was the best way to allay any public doubt on the integrity and conduct of the police.

The commission should be given the authority to investigate and interview officers and individuals at all levels regardless of their rank, position and social standing, MTUC president Senator Zainal Rampak said in a statement.

"We would like to urge the commission to make public its findings so that there will be no doubts cast on its purpose, terms of reference, independence and competence," he said.

The Malaysian Muslim Students Association, in welcoming the setting up

of the commission, hoped that it would adhere to the principles of justice and truth without being influenced by any party.

Gerakan central committee member Dr S. Vijayaratnam also welcomed the establishment of the commission, saying it comprised members with commendable integrity.

"The only thing that remains is for them to get on with their task immediately, and clear up this matter once and for all. Justice delayed is justice denied," he said.

Meanwhile, Anwar's wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail who is Pergerakan Keadilan Sosial (Adil) pro-tem president said the movement believed that the members of the commission would be able to discharge their function responsibly and in a just and fair manner.

"We welcome the setting up of a Commission of Inquiry to probe into the police assault on my husband Anwar Ibrahim whilst in police custody," she said in a statement outside the High Court here this afternoon.

Dr Wan Azizah reiterated that the larger issue in the investigation on the assault was for the government to ensure that it discharges its duty to guarantee the citizen's constitutional rights and the protection from arbitrary arrest, oppression, torture, intimidation and brutal "turning over" acts.

"To this extend, I urge the Home Ministry to respect the peoples' rights and protect the peace loving public from unbridled police abuse of authority. This must be stopped," she said.

Meanwhile, Aliran, commenting on the same issue, said the appointment of Abu Talib as one of the commission member brought back "bad memories" of the 1988 judicial crisis.

Its president P. Ramakrishnan said Abu Talib was also remembered as the man who ordered the destruction of the incriminating D.P. Vijandran tapes and photographs, which had saved the government from embarrassment.

Vijandran, who was then the Dewan Rakyat deputy speaker, was alleged to have been involved with video sex scandals.

"With this unfortunate background, most Malaysians will find it difficult to accept him as a member of the commission," he said.

Aliran said the commission should complete its work within two months, that the hearings before it be conducted publicly and transparently and that the report be submitted to Parliament and released to the public.

Ramakrishnan said the movement was also of the opinion that the final report should not be submitted to Mohtar.

He said Mohtar should not have any part in the inquiry as he had failed to shed any light into the assault in the four months after the assault happened and had "sat" for six weeks on the special investigation team's report that was submitted to him.

Ramakrishnan said another independent commission should also be set up to look into the integrity and professionalism of the police force in the light of complaints of police brutality and numerous instances of questionable conduct.

He said the police force also need to be reformed to restore public confidence in the force as an institution.

Such a commission should also examine the need for Special Branch and its harsh methods of interrogation including its use of despicable "turning over" and "neutralising" methods, Ramakrishnan added.

-- BERNAMA

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