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Mahathir-Karpal

GOVT CONSIDERS TAKING LEGAL ACTION AGAINST KARPAL SINGH, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 6 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government is considering taking legal action against lawyer Karpal Singh for a libellous statement in court implying that the government was involved in the alleged poisoning of jailed former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Dr Mahathir said it was libellous to accuse the government of poisoning Anwar, who is serving a six-year jail sentence for corruption and currently being tried for sodomy.

"I don't know what the results of the findings (medical reports on Anwar) are, but one thing you can be sure, the government doesn't indulge in poisoning people," he said.

The prime minister was speaking at an airport Press conference on returning from Zimbabwe where he attended the 3rd Southern Africa International Dialogue at Victoria Falls and addressing the 54th United Nations General Assembly in New York earlier.

His wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali was among those present at the airport to receive the prime minister.

Dr Mahathir said that Karpal Singh had suggested that someone in the government, implying that the government, was involved in poisoning Anwar with arsenic.

"Karpal is not just a defence lawyer, he is also an opposition politician who is trying to make as much mileage as he can from this trial and it has now become not a trial but a political campaign using the court," he said.

Yesterday, the High Court here was told that medical tests, conducted locally and abroad, have found no clinical signs to show that Anwar was suffering from acute or chronic arsenic poisoning.

Justice Datuk Ariffin Jaka read out the report on the tests submitted by the Director of UKM Hospital (HUKM) Datuk Dr Khalid Abdul Kadir.

The same court had on Sept 10 ordered that Anwar, 52, be sent to HUKM following his allegation of arsenic poisoning.

Asked to comment of a claim by Anwar's wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail that Anwar did declare his assets to him while serving as Finance Minister, Dr Mahathir maintained that he did not receive the declaration.

"There's none, I did not get the declaration, I'll have to get back to check if there's any, as far as I'm aware I did not get it," he said.

"We have to make declaration once every two years, but there are ministers who delayed doing so but as far as I know, I did not see the asset declaration by Anwar.

"He may have declared, give me a copy then, he can compare with what he has now," the prime minister said.

Asked whether civil servants would be getting bonus this year, Dr Mahathir said it would depend whether the government could afford to pay.

"So they want RM1,000 a year extra for everybody, we'll look at it, if we can afford, why not. If we cannot afford, I hope that people don't resort to industrial action because that is very damaging," he said.

The prime minister said the government would not ill-treat its employees and deny them what was due to them but it could only give what it could afford.

He said the government had paid civil servants special payment of RM100

a month for six months since last July even without them demanding.

"That's RM600 we have given, no pressures, no demands by Cuepacs and I thanked them for that, because we can afford, we give," he added.

Umno Vice President Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said it was a fact that Karpal Singh had been willing to take up the case for the political gains accruing from it.

"From the very beginning, the case had been turned into a political forum and it is very clear from their approach that it was not to counter the charge but rather to create uneasiness among the people and also overseas," he told reporters.

To claim that Anwar had been poisoned was a very serious matter as it not only involved Anwar but also the question of national security and the country's image.

Following the claim, there had been demonstrations and riots in Kuala Lumpur when ultimately the claim had been proved to be baseless.

Whatever action that needed to be taken against Karpal Singh was now up to the relevant authorities, he added.

As anyone making a false claim should be held accountable for it, Najib said.

--BERNAMA

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