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Govt may consider setting up inquiry board

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THE Government may consider the setting up of an independent inquiry board to further investigate the physical injuries inflicted on former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim while he was in police custody. Prime Minister and Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that if the establishment of such a body was desired by many, the Government would consider it.

He was speaking to reporters in Kuala Lumpur last night, after a ceremony to present Hari Raya gifts and school assistance to orphans from the Federal Territory Muslim Orphanage.

Attorney-General Tan Sri Mohtar Abdullah announced on Tuesday that some of Anwar's injuries while in police custody were caused by police officers, and that he had ordered a deeper investigation.

To handle the task, Mohtar had on December 30 directed the case's special investigation team, headed by ACP Mat Zain Ibrahim, to interview the Inspector General of Police Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Noor and several senior officers whose statements had not been recorded.

Certain quarters, including the Opposition, are not satisfied with this development, claiming that it would be difficult and awkward for the Special Team to question their senior officers.

As such, they are calling for the formation of an independent inquiry board so that the probe will be transparent.

"They are claiming that the investigations are not thorough. They said many top officers have not been questioned yet ... If everybody desires (such a board), we will consider," Dr Mahathir said.

In his speech earlier, Dr Mahathir said Muslims in Malaysia should be grateful that they can perform their fasting in peace and harmony even during the present economic situation.

He also said efforts to assist the needy in Malaysia are still going on, with social welfare homes and orphanages continuing to receive donations from individuals and organisations.

"What we have is not as bad as what is happening in some countries where they no longer have donors to assist the needy," he added.

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