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Commission-Public

INQUIRY ON ANWAR INJURIES OPEN TO PUBLIC

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 3 (Bernama) -- The proceedings of the independent commission of inquiry investigating injuries on former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim while in police custody will be opened to the public, a member of the commission said today.

Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman said this was decided by the four-member commission when they met informally here today.

"We are of the unanimous view that in view of the importance of this case and in view of the fact that the case has attracted much attention and concern, that it should be an open inquiry," the former attorney-general told reporters when met at his office here.

The commission is headed by former Chief Judge of Malaya Tan Sri Anuar Zainal Abidin.

The other members of the commission are former Appeal Court Judge Datuk Mahadev Shankar and former Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president and orthopaedic surgeon Datuk Dr Yeoh Poh Hong.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government would make public the findings of the commission.

When announcing the formation of the commission on Jan 27, Dr Mahathir said that with its establishment, police investigations into Anwar's injuries last September headed by Kuala Lumpur CID Chief SAC II Mat Zin Ibrahim would cease.

Abu Talib said the commission had fixed Feb 22 to start the inquiry "provided that all the necessary administrative arrangement is in place" including the appointment of a secretary for the commission.

"We are ready," he said.

Abu Talib said in the past (based on previous commission of inquiries), the secretary was normally a member of the administration.

He said the commission also required a premise to conduct the inquiry, a typist, tape recorders and so on.

"We hope to be provided by all the facilities so that no time is wasted," he said.

He also said the commission was actually made up of a three-member panel with him leading the investigations.

"My function is to seek and to lead the investigations...to assist the commission by presenting the evidence.

"I am in the process of preparing my case and I will call all whom I consider can assist me to present the case to the commission," he said.

Abu Talib said the commission was entitled to call any witnesses whom they consider could assist in their probe.

"The witnesses will have to give evidence on oath," he said.

Abu Talib said he had contacted Anwar's leading counsel Raja Aziz Addruse for a full statement from Anwar and if necessary, he would meet Anwar.

Last Saturday, the Kuala Lumpur High Court ordered Anwar to enter his defence against four corruption charges on Feb 8.

Abu Talib said it was not his intention to introduce "irrelevant evidence" to the commission. "I am sure the commission will not permit me."

He said for those who would be affected by the investigation, they would be allowed to engage a lawyer of their choice.

Asked how soon the commission would be able to complete its probe, Abu Talib said no time frame had been set "but we are just as anxious as

everyone else that we should complete it as soon as possible."

Abu Talib said the length of the inquiry would depend on the number of witnesses he would be calling "and it is too early to tell just how many."

On the findings of the commission, Abu Talib said it would be submitted to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

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