

16/02/1999

Panel starts hearing on Monday (HL)

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Having sorted out all administrative details, the Royal Commission to investigate alleged injuries suffered by Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim while in police custody, will start its hearing on Monday.

The open inquiry will begin at 10am at the Jalan Raja court complex.

Former Attorney-General Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman who has been appointed to lead the investigation, said the inquiry would start with witnesses being called to give evidence.

On who would be called first, he said: "I have given to the police a list of witnesses to be subpoenaed. We will take it from there on Monday."

On when Anwar would be called, Abu Talib said the date could not be ascertained yet as it depended on the progress of the inquiry.

As it would be an open inquiry, Abu Talib said those interested to follow the proceedings could do so.

"We have made known the place where the inquiry is to be held. They are free to come but the number allowed in is subject to the availability of seats."

In a statement issued to Bernama today, the commission said Home Ministry Deputy Secretary-General (1) Datuk Ismail Hamzah had been appointed its secretary.

The statement said the Yang di-Pertuan Agong had given his consent to Ismail's appointment, in line with Section 7 of the Commission of Inquiry Act 1950.

The setting up of the commission was announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last month following calls by various quarters that Anwar's injuries be fully investigated.

Investigations conducted by the police earlier have been found to be incomplete by Attorney-General Tan Sri Mohtar Abdullah.

Mohtar said on Jan 5 that police officers were responsible for some of the injuries sustained by Anwar when he was under police custody.

His revelation resulted in the Jan 8 resignation of former Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Noor who assumed responsibility for Anwar's injuries while in detention.

Anwar, who was removed as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister on Sept 2, last year, and was arrested two weeks later for allegedly leading an unlawful assembly, appeared in court on Sept 29 with a black eye.

Anwar alleged that he had been beaten unconscious while in police custody.

The commission of inquiry which will submit its report to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong is a three-member panel comprising former Chief Justice of Malaya Tan Sri Anuar Zainal Abidin as its head, former Court of Appeal judge Datuk Mahadev Shankar and Pantai Medical Centre's consultant orthopaedic surgeon Datuk Dr Yeoh Poh Hong.

Abu Talib earlier announced that the proceedings of the commission of inquiry would be open and it had the right to call any witness felt to be vital, to testify.

Ismail, as secretary to the commission, will deal with all administrative matters.

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