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Rahim: I slapped Anwar twice on face

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Former Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Noor told the Royal Commission of Inquiry that he slapped Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim on the "left and right" side of his face last year.

He said he slapped Anwar, who then fell on the cement slab of his cell, after the former Deputy Prime Minister had uttered the words "Ni, bapa anjing" when he was about to remove his blindfold.

Abdul Rahim, however, said he could not remember whether he had delivered any other blows on Anwar, who was then under police custody, but said: "I could have done it. I may have not done it".

"It happened in split seconds ... I (then) felt someone physically pulling me from my back and out of the cell. I then went back to the 30th floor (at Bukit Aman)," he said.

Recalling the incident, Abdul Rahim said when he went into the cell, Anwar was standing and blindfolded but he was not sure whether Anwar was handcuffed or not.

"When I approached him ... my first instinct was to remove the blindfold. As I was about to do it, he uttered 'Ni bapa anjing' (Here's, father of the dogs)," he said.

Abdul Rahim told the three-man panel investigating injuries sustained by Anwar that when he heard this, he lost his cool and sense of control.

The three-member commission comprises former Chief Justice of Malaya Tan Sri Anuar Zainal Abidin, who is heading it, former Court of Appeal judge Datuk Mahadev Shankar and Pantai Medical Centre consultant orthopaedic surgeon Datuk Dr Yeoh Poh Hong.

Former attorney-general Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman is leading the investigation.

"Perhaps because of the offensive words ... perhaps because what we (the police) had discussed (earlier) on the situation in Kuala Lumpur that evening, pressure was there on me. All this in totality caused me to lose my sense of balance," he said.

He said CID director Datuk Yaacob Mohd Amin pulled him out of the cell saying "Tan Sri" repeatedly two or three times but said he was not sure whether CID deputy director Datuk Ramli Yusoff was there at that time as "the matter happened so fast".

"I wish to make it clear, my act was not prompted, asked, abetted, directed, instructed, assisted by anyone, not even my police officers and not even by the Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad)," he said when replying to another question.

Abdul Rahim also denied he had given any signals to anybody to handcuff and blindfold Anwar in his cell in the lock-up area before proceeding to the cell.

He also denied he had given instructions to Chief Inspector Yap Khiam Wai to remind those bringing Anwar to Bukit Aman after his arrest to ensure Anwar was blindfolded. He said there was no reason to do so.

Abdul Rahim said he was briefed by Special Force commander Datuk Meor Chek Hussein Mahayuddin on Anwar's arrest while he was in a discussion with other senior police officers.

He said at that time, they were still searching for answers to the situation in the Klang Valley, wondering whether they should ask for help from the army and on whether to impose curfew to avoid bloodshed as seen in Jakarta.

"We decided to seek assistance from the army, ... seeking assistance from State Police contingents, reinforcements of FRU personnel and support from the General Operations Force," he said.

Abdul Rahim said about 20 to 30 minutes later, he decided to come down to meet Anwar at his cell because he knew Anwar. He was met by Yaacob on the ground floor before they proceeded to the lock-up area.

He said when he returned to the 30th floor (after the incident), they continued their discussion on public order as the crowd was still gathering in front of Seri Perdana and they were debating whether to impose a curfew.

"It was then that we found out that the arrest (of Anwar) was effected under section 377B of the Penal Code by the Kuala Lumpur police," he said.

He said his deputy (then) Tan Sri Norian Mai was annoyed and asked why Anwar was arrested under section 377B (and not ISA).

"We were asking for an explanation why was the wrong law applied and we were told there was a miscommunication. It was not communicated fast enough down," he said.

Abdul Rahim said earlier that day on (Sept 20) at 8pm, at a meeting attended, among others, by Norian, the Special Branch Director Datuk Yusof Abdul Rahman and Management Director Datuk Mohd Jamil Johari they had decided to arrest Anwar under the ISA.

He said the uppermost concern in their minds was to avoid riots as that seen in Indonesia from occurring here at all costs and also to avoid a repeat of the May 13, 1969 incident.

Abdul Rahim said they believed Anwar was the main organiser of the demonstrations in Kuala Lumpur.

"On Sept 22, Yaacob and Ramli came to see me at my office and informed me of the request made by Anwar for a doctor. No mention was made of the injury to the forehead or the eye," he said.

Abdul Rahim said his immediate reaction was that since Anwar was under the Special Branch detention perhaps it should take further action on Anwar's request.

He also said that he was not aware at that time that Anwar had any injuries as it happened in split seconds "I was never told of the injury on the forehead".

Earlier, Abdul Rahim also testified on the situation in Kuala Lumpur on Sept 20 saying just before the evening prayers, crowds from the National Mosque had spilled over into Dataran Merdeka.

"There were fiery speeches made by Anwar, in addition to those made earlier by him at Masjid Negara, from there, the crowd continued their activity to the Putra World Trade Centre," he said.

"A part of them also headed towards the Prime Minister's official residence ... We were practically caught with our pants down," he said.

Abdul Rahim said intelligence came from Special Branch officers with a few high-grade believable reports which claimed that the demonstrators had planned to sit-in at Parliament.

To a question by Karpal, on his press statement on his resignation, he said, he did not accept personal responsibility then because "I understood that there was a police investigation in progress".

He also said that he did not admit in his statement to the then ACP Mat Zain Ibrahim, who was heading a special investigation team investigating the injuries, as he did not have the benefit of a counsel then.

To another question, Abdul Rahim denied that he went into the cell and immediately punched Anwar on the forehead.

When asked on a statement by him on Sept 24 at a Press conference where he was reported to have said that Anwar was safe and sound, he said, based on information he received on Sept 22, he honestly thought that Anwar was

safe and that was why he had said Anwar would be put to trial.

He also denied the attack had been planned.

To a question by Teh, he said, apart from the circumstances then, he had no reason or motive to assault Anwar saying "We were close friends although he was not my minister".

Another witness, ASP Zulkifli Mohamed, told the inquiry he saw Ramli giving signals to blindfold and handcuff Anwar while he (Zulkifli) was coming out of Anwar's cell.

He said he later saw Abdul Rahim, Yaacob and Ramli heading towards the passage leading to Anwar's cell.

Shortly after, Zulkifli said he heard someone exclaim "Adui! Kenapa pukul saya Jangan Pukul Saya".

He said he then saw Yaacob pulling Abdul Rahim while Ramli was pushing Abdul Rahim.

The inquiry continues.

(END)