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Special team to probe arsenic poisoning claim

SEPANG, Fri. - Home Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today ordered a special team of investigators to be formed to immediately investigate allegations against the Government in connection with Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's suspected arsenic poisoning.

"I have informed the officers concerned to initiate an investigation to probe into the allegations hurled against the Government which I feel are very serious." he said.

Abdullah, who is also Deputy Prime Minister was speaking at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport before leaving for New Zealand to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation Leaders' Summit in Auckland.

Abdullah will represent Malaysia at the Apec weekend summit. He will be leading the Malaysian delegation in place of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who cannot attend due to his busy schedule in the country.

"I am shocked by news that Anwar has been allegedly poisoned. I am also saddened by the news.

"But, the statement made by (Anwar's wife) Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah (Wan Ismail) is serious and specific against the Government which must be viewed seriously."

He said steps had been taken to initiate investigations.

"There should be no interruption. The results will be handed over to the authorities once the investigations are completed."

Abdullah, however, said there was no concrete proof that the sample belonged to Anwar since it was sent to Melbourne under another person's name.

"Nevertheless, no stones will be left unturned. We will conduct a thorough investigation. The culprit will be dealt with in accordance with the law."

He was, however, puzzled as to the delay in bringing up the issue since the report was received on Aug 26.

"If it was that serious they should have brought it up immediately," he said.

Asked who would head the investigation team, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai, who was also at the Press conference, said as it would be a normal investigation there would be no need for a head.

"He (Abdullah) just announced it tonight. We will work on it," he said.

Abdullah said he was puzzled how such an allegation could be hurled at the Government when Anwar was given good treatment in the prison.

Abdullah then read from a list of things accorded to Anwar, among which was that Anwar was placed in a room measuring 9.75mX6.4mX2.4m.

It has eight windows measuring 0.6mX0.6m and another measuring 1.4mX1.7m.

Among the things provided to him are a cupboard, table, fan, curtains, chair, pail, writing pads and a well balanced diet.

There were 32 items on the list including books and magazines.

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