

07/10/1999

We'll look into 'libellous' statements by Karpal, says Dr M

Carolyn Hong

PETALING JAYA, Wed. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said the Government will look into the "libellous" statements of lawyer Karpal Singh who allegedly claimed that the Government had poisoned Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said the Government did not indulge in poisoning people.

"This suggestion by Karpal that someone in the Government, implying that the Government is involved, is poisoning (Anwar) ... we have to look into because it is a libellous statement," he told reporters at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International airport upon his arrival from Zimbabwe.

Dr Mahathir had attended the third Southern Africa International Dialogue in Victoria Falls after his visit to London and New York.

On Sept 10, Karpal had alleged arsenic poisoning after informing the judge hearing Anwar's sodomy trial that a urine sample, purportedly from Anwar, was found to have a high level of arsenic.

"It could well be that someone out there wants to get rid of him ... even to the extent of murder," Karpal had said, adding that the person responsible should be charged with attempted murder. Karpal had also said: "I suspect people in higher places are responsible for the situation."

However, a medical report which was made public by the court yesterday has revealed that there were no signs of acute or chronic poisoning in Anwar. The tests were conducted by Hospital Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Perth Chemistry Centre in Australia, and Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital in London.

Asked if any action would be taken against Karpal, Dr Mahathir said the Government had first to determine if there were grounds to do so.

"If there are no grounds, we can't. Karpal is not just a defence lawyer, he is also an Opposition politician who is trying to make as much mileage as he can from the trial.

"It has now become not just a trial but a political campaign within the court," he said.

Karpal is DAP national deputy chairman and Member of Parliament for Jelutong.

Dr Mahathir also said there had been much delay in Anwar's sodomy trial and he expected even more delay. "We can expect more delay, more dramatics and all that, more urine being tested, more arsenic ... all kinds of things will be raised.

"I think it's libellous to accuse the Government of poisoning him. One thing we can be sure, the Government does not indulge in poisoning people," he said.

The Prime Minister was also asked to comment on Anwar's statement that he had declared his assets, contrary to what Dr Mahathir had said. He had told Malaysian students in London that Anwar did not declare his assets, but Anwar refuted this by saying he had made a declaration when he was appointed Finance Minister.

Anwar also said when he was appointed Deputy Prime Minister, he had written to Dr Mahathir to state that his assets remained unchanged.

The Prime Minister today said he did not receive Anwar's declaration.

"We have to make a declaration once every two years. Sometimes, Ministers are slow in doing so but as far as I know, I did not see his (Anwar's declaration).

"If there is one, give me a copy and we can compare (his assets) with what he has now," he said.

(END)