

Dr M: Decision on Anwar is final

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'Doctors have said he can be treated here'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — The Government's decision not to allow Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to seek medical treatment abroad is final, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said Anwar was trying to politicise his illness, adding that doctors had certified that he could be treated locally.

"We have never allowed this before. This applies also to government officers who wish to seek treatment abroad. They will be allowed to do so only after the doctors say treatment is not available here," he said after launching Workers' Day celebrations at the National Institute of Public Administration (Intan) in Bukit Kiara.

Dr Mahathir was asked by reporters to comment on a letter submitted to him by 108 individuals that Anwar be allowed to undergo surgery overseas.

Among those who signed the letter were Beserah Assemblyman Datuk Fauzi Abdul Rahman, national laureates Datuk Usman Awang and Prof Muhammad Salleh, film director and novelist U-Wei Shaari, heart specialist Datuk Dr Nik Zainal Abidin Nik Abdul Rahman and consultant neurologist Dr Abu Salim.

Co-ordinator of the appeal, Raja

Ahmad Aminullah Raja Abdullah was quoted as saying that the 108 did not represent any particular group but acted based on humanitarian grounds.

Dr Mahathir said Anwar's ailment was not unusual and his contention that only Dr Thomas Hoogland could treat him was a lie as many Malaysians suffering from a similar ailment had been treated locally.

"Hundreds of people have been treated for back pains here but he is saying that only one doctor in the entire world can treat him. I am a doctor myself ... you don't have to lie," he said.

The Health Ministry had given Anwar five options to treat his slipped disc.

Two of them are either endoscopic surgery by Dr Hoogland or laser surgery by Dr Kazem Dajavadkhani, both of whom are Anwar's private consultants.

Another two options are either open surgery at Kuala Lumpur Hospital or microscopic surgery as recommended by 14 consultants appointed by the Government — also at KLH.

The fifth option is to do nothing and continue to receive conservative treatment in prison.

Anwar, who was admitted to KLH on Nov 25 last year, is still undergoing treatment there. This makes him the longest-staying patient at a government hospital for a slipped disc.

Dr Mahathir also criticised Dr Hoogland for likening KLH's operation theatre to a kitchen.

"This is an insult. I myself had my heart bypass there (an operation) which is more difficult than those with back pains."

He said allegations that KLH did not have proper equipment to treat Anwar and that equipment to treat him could not be flown into Malaysia were blatant lies.

"These are all politics. He even claimed one time that we gave him poison (arsenic). These are all lies."

Dr Mahathir said when the authorities allowed Anwar to pay his last respects to his mother who died last month, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) took pictures of Anwar in a wheelchair and then aired it worldwide.

"Even that event was politicised. They wanted to show how badly the Government treated Anwar."

Asked what could Anwar's intentions to seek treatment abroad be, Dr Mahathir said this was a non-issue because as far as the local medical fraternity was concerned, Anwar's medical problem could be treated here.

Asked to comment on a call by Fauzi that the Government allow Anwar to seek treatment overseas, Dr Mahathir said this was because they were good friends.

"But did anyone ask Fauzi whether he had asked Anwar why he blamed the Government for poisoning him?" he asked.