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Anwar should be treated like any other ordinary prisoner

S.R.

THE recent saga between Malaysia's leading hospital doctors, the Health Minister and jailed former Deputy Prime Minister on the type of treatment to be rendered for his slipped disc, the doctor who should administer the treatment and where the operation should be carried out is a clear example of how a "glorified" convicted man seems to get away scott free with his demands for treatment under the veiled threat of pointing an accusing finger if anything goes wrong.

All this was to muster public sympathy.

And Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is very lucky to get a Prime Minister like Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who seems to be ever so accommodating to his numerous requests.

Actually, as PM, Dr Mahathir need not go so far to accommodate Anwar's demands. His patience only shows his concern for Anwar, something he had expressed from the very first day Anwar and his cliques started protesting boisterously against the Malaysian Government after getting the sack.

As a Singaporean I am very jealous of the great amount of publicity and privilege given to Anwar.

If Anwar had been jailed in Singapore, he can forget about seeing the daylight or leaving the prison complex to be warded in a general hospital under the pretext of getting first class treatment.

He will get his first class medical treatment but under the conditions of a criminal cell and locked up in the prison hospital.

And he can forget about giving Press statements through his wife and family members as he is so freely allowed to do from his Malaysian prison cell. In Singapore, there is no need for the public to know the condition of a prisoner, be he a top Minister or a man-in-the-street.

The time Anwar would ever be allowed to issue a written statement in Singapore if he were jailed here would be on the day of his release, if he is ever remembered by the public at large on that day and if he ever dared to do so after his jail term.

You can be assured such people would have been completely neutralised by the time they were released.

I say to the Malaysian prison authorities: stop pampering Anwar, treat him like any other ordinary criminal and send the right message to the man-in-the street that everyone is equal before the law, in justice being meted out and in the prisons carrying out the sentence.