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Mahathir-Anwar

ANWAR'S AILMENT CAN BE TREATED IN MALAYSIA, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, May 1 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister said today Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's slipped disc ailment is not something unusual that can only be treated overseas by only one doctor out of the 6 billion world population.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia had specialists and medical and surgical equipment capable of performing the spinal surgery on Anwar.

"So, there's no need to say that Malaysia cannot do it. Its a lie, its politics, just like the other day when he accused us of giving him poison, it's all lies," he told reporters after attending the 2001 Workers Day Rally for public sector employees, here.

Dr Mahathir said the government's decision not to allow Anwar to be treated overseas was final but it did not mean that the government had no sympathy for him.

He was asked to comment on the appeal to the government contained in a letter signed by 108 Malaysians of various professional backgrounds and ages for Anwar to be allowed to undergo treatment overseas.

Anwar, who is serving 15 years' jail for corrupt practice and sodomy, has been warded in the Kuala Lumpur Hospital since last November for back pain.

Dr Mahathir was also asked about the possibility of Anwar intending to seek political asylum by asking to be treated overseas.

He said: "We don't know his intention, we don't care and we don't question his intention. But the reality is that this ailment can be treated in Malaysia, if not by surgery then by conservative means."

The prime minister said a government employee seeking to be treated overseas must also get confirmation from a doctor that the treatment could not be done in Malaysia.

"Doctors here feel that he (Anwar) can be treated in the country so why would he want to go overseas. Why does he want to be so privileged when he is a prisoner?" Dr Mahathir said.

He said many Malaysians with ailments similar to Anwar's had been successfully treated by local doctors.

Dr Mahathir also criticised Anwar's German specialist, Dr Thomas Hoogland, for running down the local hospital facilities, including equating the operating theatre he saw to a kitchen, during a recent visit to Malaysia.

"He said that our operating theatre is like a kitchen. This is an insult. I myself have undergone a more serious operation than spinal surgery," he said, referring to the heart surgery that he had at the National Heart Institute (IJN) here some time ago.

He also refuted Dr Hoogland's claim that the medical equipment he needed could not be flown to Malaysia.

Asked to comment on Beserah state assemblyman Datuk Fauzi Abdul Rahman being one of the signatories of the letter of appeal, Dr Mahathir said Fauzi was Anwar's close friend.

-- BERNAMA

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