

DPM: Anwar can bring in foreign specialists

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Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said he has informed two United Kingdom (UK) government leaders that Anwar Ibrahim is treated locally for his health problems and is also allowed to bring in foreign medical specialists to treat him in Malaysia.

Zahid said the explanation was given to UK Home Secretary Theresa May and Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Hugo Swire, who asked about the medical treatment to the former leader of Malaysia's opposition during his meetings with them separately here on Tuesday and yesterday.

Zahid, who concluded his four-day visit to the UK yesterday, said the two leaders asked the question in relation to a letter sent by UK Prime Minister David Cameron UK to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, inquiring about the treatment given to Anwar, who is currently serving time in Sungai Buloh Prison.

At that meeting, he had also explained to them that Najib also received a letter from the president of Georgetown University who attached two letters, from United States Secretary of State John Kerry and US security adviser Susan Rice on the same question.

"Obviously this question has some connection with the assumption that Anwar is not given any proper service, particularly in terms of medical treatment provided and should be given," he said.

"I have expressed on behalf of the government and the Department of Prisons Malaysia that Anwar has been given proper treatment, including the decision by the (Prisons) department to allow a group of medical experts from Georgetown University, USA, to come to Malaysia to conduct treatment and surgical procedures for the illness suffered by Anwar," Zahid (*photo*) told a press conference with Malaysian journalists in London.

He also briefed the two leaders in the UK that medical experts from abroad were allowed to be brought in and treat Anwar in any government hospital and they also could bring groups of specialists, including medical assistants needed according to the health problems suffered by Anwar. Earlier reports said that Anwar suffers from chronic shoulder injury.

Anwar, said Zahid, is warded at the Sungai Buloh Prison and was given medical treatment in prison as well as specialist treatment in Kuala Lumpur Hospital (HKL) and Universiti Malaya Medical Centre.

The explanation given by him, he said, surprised both the UK leaders, probably due to the impression given to them previously that Anwar was not given any treatment by medical specialists or doctors in Malaysia.

Zahid called on all parties not to misinterpret the explanation that Anwar was given special treatment by the Prisons Department but it was only due to the need for treatment by a specialist.

He said all parties should be aware that there were medical specialists in the same field in Malaysia and there was no need for doctors from abroad to treat Anwar.

"But because the Prison Department felt that it was to give the picture to the international community that we provide this based on humanitarian grounds, then the decision should be accepted by all parties with tolerance and open-mindedness and not as giving any privileges to Anwar.

"I hope that his family accepts the decision of the Prisons Department with an open mind because some questions have been made in the Dewan Rakyat sitting, especially the debates on the budget which touched on the responsibility of the Home Ministry," he said.

Zahid said the cabinet was informed there were almost 200 visits while Anwar was in jail by medical specialists and doctors, while lawyers handled 16 of Anwar's cases that are still

ongoing in court besides meeting with family members either in prison or hospital while receiving treatment.

The authorities, however, could not meet the requests of some international NGOs leaders and international political leaders to meet with Anwar as a person in custody is not supposed to get any privileges (just) because he was known to many, he said.

The deputy prime minister hoped that the explanation he gave when he visited the United States last October would give the picture to the international community that the sentence imposed on Anwar was not due to a political offence and he is not a political detainee.

Anwar went through the legislative process which was not a decision by the government but the court's decision in accordance with the judicial system in Malaysia and it had nothing to do with any so-called interference from the government in the trial concerned, he said.

Zahid said the explanation he gave was with the knowledge of all members of the cabinet and it was presented as a report from the Prison Department to the cabinet.

"I hope this issue is not polemicised either by the opposition or any party to make an issue because the offence and legal process have been conducted and the Prisons Department has carried out its duty as provided by the law and prison regulations," he added.

Overall, Ahmad Zahid thanked the parties involved in conducting the visit, especially the Malaysian security agencies which had contributed to the anticipated success.

"On behalf of the Prime Minister's Department, I am very grateful to the Home Ministry, police, Immigration Department and office of the Malaysian High Commission in London for helping to ensure the success of this programme.

"My visit has deeply impacted not only Malaysia-UK bilateral relations, but it also has created several new cooperations," he said.

Ahmad Zahid, who arrived on a commercial flight on Sunday, departed for Malaysia on Wednesday evening using Malaysia Airlines.

- *Bernama*

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