

Devamany : Don't turn Kugan's death into a racial issue
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Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department SK Devamany today said the death of Kugan Ananthan should not be turned into a racial issue.

He also admonished those who were using the 22-year-old's death for political gain.

"This is not a racial issue and anyone who intends to make it one is being very irresponsible.

sk devamany"Using the death of a young man for political gain is the lowest one can go in politics," he said in a statement today without naming anyone in particular.

He added that Kugan's death at the hands of the police was a tragedy that warrants a full and transparent investigation.

Devamany is being investigated by the police for allegedly breaking into the Serdang Hospital morgue on Tuesday night to see Kugan's body, along with several others, including another deputy minister T Murugiah.

The MIC treasurer however reiterated that no such illegal incident had occurred at the mortuary.

"For the record, I once again state that at no time was any force used to procure entry into the mortuary," he said.

Disheartened with Home Minister

He added that he had told the police this when asked to give his statement at the Sepang police headquarters.

Devamany was also disheartened by Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar's statement on his and Murugiah's alleged wrongdoing in breaking into the morgue.

"As part of the BN government, the home minister could have first clarified the matter with us to gain a more accurate picture of what actually transpired and to appreciate our intentions and reasons for being at the Serdang Hospital mortuary," he said.

kugan funeral 230109 family cryingKugan, 22, who was detained on Jan 15 at the Taipan police station in Subang Jaya on suspicion of being involved in the theft of luxury cars in Sungai Chua, Kajang, died while being questioned on Jan 20.

His family is claiming that he was assaulted. The first post-mortem done at the Serdang Hospital revealed that he had died of liquid in his lungs.

The family has insisted on a second post-mortem, which was done on Sunday at the Universiti Malaya Medical Centre (UMMC). His remains will be buried later today.

'It's a Malaysian issue'

A procession is planned to start from UMMC to a cemetery in Puchong at 2pm today. The police have however warned against the 'illegal' procession, stating that it is politically motivated.

Yesterday a non-governmental organisation Pewaris appealed to MIC president S Samy Vellu to urge the Indian community not to get involved in the procession.

Pewaris deputy chairman II Rahimuddin Md Harun told a press conference that any protest during the procession would be inadvisable as it might offend the sensitivities of others.

Responding to this today, an Indian-based NGO calling itself Concern Youth Movement (CYM) said that Kugan's death was not just an Indian issue.

kugan death protest 210109 posters 01 "The brutal death of Kugan in police custody has offended the sensitivities of all Malaysians regardless of their background, race, religion and colour.

"Kugan's death is Malaysians' issue. The whole nation wants to know the truth," said CYM coordinator Manivanan Gowin.

"We would like Pewaris to understand the difference between protest demonstrations and funeral processions.

"It is normal practice for all Malaysians regardless of their background, race, religion and colour to follow a funeral possession (to pay) their last respects," he said.

He added that the police should allow everyone to pay their last respects to Kugan.

Codify police powers

In another development, Gerakan deputy president Chang Ko Youn said that Kugan's death has stressed the need for the codification of police investigation powers.

"It is important for us to seriously evaluate the enactment of a piece of legislation that will codify the current laws on investigation of crimes and the detention of suspects," said Chang, who is also the party's legal and human rights bureau head.

He said a variety of Acts and the Penal Code govern police investigation and detention procedures.

"The current protection for suspects is inadequate, resulting in a considerable number of suspects losing their lives while under detention," he said.

He added that a law like the UK's Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 is needed to codify how the police must treat suspects.

Chang said a codified Act can also ensure that the police respect basic principles of human rights.

He also expressed his disappointment that not all lock-ups have been fitted with close-circuit television cameras (CCTV) despite a legal requirement to do so.

"For too long we have given very wide powers to our enforcement officials, resulting in abuse and mismanagement of the power.

"This does not reflect well on the government as a whole and we risk the people's support if we remain inert on this important issue."

He said that the government must take immediate actions to prevent custodial deaths.

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