

'Interference in politics taboo' Why judges must stay neutral—PM

NST - 8 SEP 1987

KUANTAN, Mon. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said it was up to the head of the judiciary to admonish judges who made public their political views.

As Prime Minister, he did not have that right in view of the judiciary's independence under the country's system of parliamentary democracy.

He said it was to ensure the continued independence of the judiciary as a separate branch of the Government that he was critical of judges making public their views on matters that did not concern their function.

Dr Mahathir described a judge's call for changes in the method of appointing senators as an intrusion into politics that might affect his impartiality if the matter was referred to his court.

"Therefore, it is important for judges to avoid making their views public. If a judge has a personal stand, then it is

By **ZAINON AHMAD** and
VIJAYAN MENON

his problem. But judges should refrain from publicising it," he said at a Press conference at the end of his three-day visit to Pahang.

It was unfortunate that certain members of a branch of the Government which should be "completely neutral and free from politics" were apparently beginning to involve themselves in politics.

Confusion

By so doing they were attempting to influence politics in the country, he said.

"As we know, the attempts to get the Federal Constitution reviewed were organised by those who oppose the Government.

"And the involvement of some judges in activities of parties that oppose the Government raises the question of whether these judges are siding with

the Opposition.

"This is not healthy for the administration of justice in the country especially after it is already stipulated that judges should not interfere in politics."

He hoped the indiscretion of these judges would not become a trend as it might result in confusion in the administration and loss of public confidence in the Government.

The Prime Minister's itinerary included a visit to the Tanjung Gelang Felda complex, Feri Malaysia office and he officiated at the ground-breaking ceremony for a condominium project in Pulau Tioman.

He also met representatives of State Barisan Nasional component parties and Pahang Umno leaders.

At a dinner hosted by Menteri Besar Datuk Khalil Yaakob yesterday, Dr Mahathir met senior State Government officials.

In **Kuala Lumpur**, both Lord President Tun Mohamed Salleh Abas and Chief Justice Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Omar could not be reached for comment.

● It is important for judges to refrain from making their views public. If a judge has a personal stand, then it is his problem. But judges should refrain from publicising it. ●

— DR M