

# PM: Bar playing politics at expense of work

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today accused the Bar Council of playing too much politics and devoting less time to legal work.

In his winding up speech at the assembly, Dr Mahathir said the judiciary faced problems due to a huge backlog of cases.

There were 300,000 cases on hold including 3,000 remand prisoners still awaiting trial.

He said recently there was a case where a remand prisoner was sentenced to 10 years but was freed the same day because he had served the 10 years while waiting for his case to be heard.

"It was fortunate that he was found guilty. What would have happened if he was found innocent. He would have wasted 10 years of his life."

Dr Mahathir said the Government had not spoken on this issue because he did not want to interfere with the judiciary.

"But this is happening. Lawyers should address this problem."

Dr Mahathir said it appeared as though the Bar

**NST 31 OCT 1988**

Council was more like a political party. It devoted more time to politics and did not care about the backlog in cases.

"This is one of the reasons for the backlog. When there is a hearing, lawyers ask for a postponement because they want to attend parliamentary or State Assembly sittings.

## Reports

"They give more attention to their political role. And while they play politics, many are in remand waiting for counsel to represent them in court."

Dr Mahathir said in other countries, like the United Kingdom, the Bar Council was headed by a lawyer in the Government.

However, in Malaysia an "independent lawyer" preferred to play politics than devoting time to legal work.

He said based on newspapers reports there were lawyers who had been charged in court, adding that the Bar Council should devote more time to disciplining lawyers.