

PM to Bar Council: Admit your lies first

By K.P. Waran

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — The Bar Council should admit that it has tarnished the image of the Malaysian judiciary throughout the world before it can expect to normalise relations with the Government and the judiciary, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed said today.

The Prime Minister said the Bar Council had to admit that it spread such lies abroad, including in the United States, Britain and Australia.

The Bar Council's actions were tantamount to indirect sabotage of the country's economy since some foreign investors had lost confidence in Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on a speech by Bar Council president Manjeet Singh Dhillon at the recent Ninth Malaysian Law Conference in Kuala Lumpur that it wanted to improve ties with the Government.

Dr Mahathir told a Press conference on his return from the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Harare and an official visit to Tanzania that during an interview with the BBC he was asked about the problems between the Bar Council and the Judiciary.

"I explained to them that it was true that the former Lord President (Tun Mohamed Salleh Abbas) was removed from office but it was done according to the due process of the law existing in the country.

On the other hand, I told the BBC that the Bar Council had tried to remove Tun Hamid (Tun Abdul Hamid Omar, the present Lord President) by bringing about a contempt of court charge against him.

"If they had succeeded in their attempt then Tun Hamid would have been removed. But there are no provisions in the law for the Lord President to be removed in such a manner.

"So I asked the BBC why this issue was not taken up. They replied that they did not know of this."

Dr Mahathir said the Bar Council had obviously given its views on the issue to the world-at-large which had forced the Government to make clarifications on the matter.

He said that although he wanted a normalisation of relations between the Bar and the Judiciary, the former had to first admit its mistakes.

Dr Mahathir said numerous articles had appeared over the removal of Tun Salleh, many of which had originated from the Bar Council.

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PM willing
to meet
Bar Council

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"When I was speaking at the Institute of Foreign Relations in New York, a member of the American Bar Association had even mentioned the name of a Malaysian who had passed him information on the issue.

"I do not know whether the Bar Council is a political party or a body responsible for protecting the honour of the legal profession.

"In other countries the Government has a role in the Bar Council. But this Bar Council's actions are like it is an anti-Government body...as if the Government had no control over it to check whether it is doing its job such as ensuring that lawyers are not cheating their clients," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was willing to meet representatives of the Bar Council on the matter but hoped they would stop spreading lies abroad.