

PM: Statement by Suffian puzzling

11 NOV 1991

DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today "thanked" the former Lord President, Tun Mohammed Suffian Hashim, for implying that he (Dr Mahathir) had the power that made even US President George Bush envious.

Tun Suffian, opening last month's Malaysian Law Conference, had said that the power exercised by Dr Mahathir in Malaysia would be the envy of President R u s h .

Winding up the three-day Umno General Assembly, Dr Mahathir said he was puzzled by Tun Suffian's statement because to his knowledge the President of the United States of America was the world's most powerful man.

"We are talking of a man who could send an army to attack a neighbouring country, arrest its President and charge him in an American court under an American law.

"If Tun Suffian still thinks I am more powerful than President Hush, I would not mind trading the posts of Umno president and the Prime Minister of Malaysia with the US President. I can rule the United States and he can rule Malaysia.

"With my power as the US President, I can send an army to Malaysia to arrest

Tun Suffian. I will bring him to the United States and charge him under the American law," he said to the roar of laughter and applause from the floor.

Referring to the delegates' condemnation of the Bar Council, Dr Mahathir said the council was so obsessed with its power and rights that it had on many occasions acted outside the very law that it purported to defend.

He said while the Government, acting upon the complaint of the Yang di-Per-tuan Agong, had religiously observed the provisions of the constitution in removing Tun Mohamad Salleh Abas, the council totally ignored them.

He said Tun Salleh was removed by a tribunal made up of members of his peers and was given ample opportunity to defend himself.

"The fact that he refused to attend the hearing of the tribunal was another matter.

"But the learned Bar had resorted to the contempt of court proceedings to remove the present Lord President, Tun Abdul Hatnid Omar," said Dr Mahathir.

He asked: "Where in the constitution is the provision that a Lord President can be removed through contempt of court proceedings?"