

Mahathir: Hamid can ask lawyers to state stand

By KHAIDIR ABD. MAJID

LAWYERS who do not recognise Tun Abdul Hamid Omar as Lord President should not appear before him in court, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said. It is the right of the Lord President to ask the lawyers who appear before him to state their stand, he added.

"If a lawyer does not recognise him as Lord President, how can they appear before him? It seems strange for a lawyer not to recognise the Lord President and yet be involved as a lawyer in a trial before him," Dr Mahathir told newsmen after attending a Hari Raya aid presentation to orphans at the Tabung Haji building in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

He added that the Bar Council has no right to determine who is the Lord President.

The Prime Minister was commenting on the announcement by the Supreme Court registrar last Monday that lawyers appearing in the Supreme Court will have to explain their stand with regard to the powers and position of the Lord President.

Hamid wants the announcement to be read in the Supreme Court for the next few days "until everybody knows". He had said if lawyers did not recognise him, they would also not recognise the panel of judges sitting in the Supreme Court because they were appointed by him.

The Bar Council at its annual general meeting on Saturday voted against a resolution seeking to overturn its 1988 decision of no confidence in Hamid as Lord President.

Bernama adds: A directive requiring lawyers who appear before the Supreme Court to make a stand on whether or not they recognise the Lord President was read out in the Supreme Court for the second time, yesterday.

And this time a senior lawyer, Mr G. Sri Ram, in court for an appeal case, stood up and said that he and the others who appear with him would like to put on record that they had always accepted and recognised the appointment of Hamid as the Lord President.

"We have always accepted Your Lordship's appointment and recognised you and have always appeared before Your Lordship's court in full recognition of that fact," Sri Ram, who appeared with Mr Joseph Loo, Mr B. Tangaraj and Ms Fiona Bodilar, said.

Another lawyer, Mr T. Thomas, who is involved in the same appeal case, also stood up and said that he fully associated himself with what Sri Ram had stated. Thomas appeared with En-cik Shamsul Bahrain Ibrahim.

Three other lawyers who were in court for another appeal case also put up similar views.

Hamid then said: "I have to do this ... it goes to the root of the matter. Otherwise the court may not be properly constituted."