

Mahathir - Australia

AUSTRALIA HAS TO GO THROUGH LEGAL CHANNELS IN RAJA BAHRIN CASE.

MAHATHIR

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KUALA LUMPUR, May 8 (Bernama) -- The Raja Kamarul Bahrin case will not affect Australia-Malaysia relations so long as Australia abides by legal channels. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on news reports that Australia's Attorney-General Michael Lavarch had directed that an extradition request for Raja Kamarul Baharin be prepared so that he can be tried in Australia for the alleged abduction of his two children last July.

Speaking to reporters after chairing the Umno Supreme Council, Dr Mahathir who is Umno President, said he was convinced that Australia would act according to existing legal channels.

"If Australia does anything which is not within the law then it will affect bilateral relations but this is not so now as Australia is abiding by legal channels," he said -- more

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News reports said Australia's move followed the sentencing of construction worker Bryan Wickham, 55, to 18 years' jail after he pleaded guilty to helping Raja Bahrin take his children Raja Muhammad Baharuddin Ismail or Iddin, 10 and Raja Shahirah, 8 out of Australia.

Dr Mahathir said the Australian Government was resorting to such action probably because its citizens lodged complaints in accordance with that country's laws.

He said this when a reporter noted that Australia's Foreign Minister Gareth Evans had previously stated that Canberra would not intervene in this case.

"I think if such complaints are lodged with the Government of Australia by its citizens as provided by Australia's laws then the government will also have to act according to the country's laws," Dr Mahathir said. -- more

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According to news reports Raja Kamarul was also seeking legal advice to have the children's mother Jacqueline Gillespie extradited to Malaysia to be tried for removing the children out of Malaysia after their divorce in 1985.

Meanwhile Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Mohammed Hanif Omar said police would act on the extradition order only if directed by the Attorney-General.

So far no such directive had been received, he told reporters at the airport here on his return from Kota Kinabalu. -- Bernama

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