

Dr M: No strained ties as long as Australia abides by the law

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Relations between Malaysia and Australia will not be strained as long as Australia abides by the law in the Raja Kamarul Bahrin Raja Ahmad case, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"If Australia does anything which is not within the law then it will affect bilateral relations. But this is not so now because Australia is going through legal channels," the Prime Minister said in response to reporters' questions.

Speaking at a Press Conference after chairing a three-hour meeting of the Umno Supreme Council, Dr Mahathir said he was confident Australia would act according to the law.

He was asked to comment on news reports that Australia's Attorney-General Michael Lavarch had directed that an extradition request for Raja Kamarul Bahrin Shah be prepared so that he can be tried in Australia for the alleged abduction of his two children last July.

News reports said Australia's move followed the sentencing of construction worker Bryan Wickham, 55, to 18 months' jail after he pleaded guilty to helping Raja Bahrin take his children, Raja Muhammad Ba-

haruddin Ismail, 10, and Raja Shahirah, 8, out of Australia.

When asked by newsmen about Australia's about-turn stance to pursue the case despite Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans having previously stated that Canberra would not intervene in the case, Dr Mahathir said:

"The Australian Government is resorting to such action probably because its citizen had lodged complaints in accordance with that country's laws.

"I think if such complaints are lodged with the Government of Australia by its citizens, as provided for under Australia's laws, then the Government will have to act."

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he had not received any request for the extradition of Raja Bahrin.

Attorney-General Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman, when contacted today, said if the Home Minister was satisfied that there was a proper case then he would direct a magistrate to issue a warrant of arrest and the case would be transferred to the Sessions Court.

"The court will then have to decide if there is a *prima facie* case for the extradition

request. If there is no *prima facie* case then he will be released and the matter ends there.

"Raja Bahrin also has the right to contest the extradition proceedings."

When asked if Raja Kamarul Bahrin's case was "a fit and proper case" for extradition, Abu Talib said he was unable to express an opinion on the matter as he did not have all the facts but only knew about what he read in the newspapers.

Expressing his own opinion on the case, Abu Talib said due consideration should be given to the children's interests.

"I hope that those concerned will be able to resolve this matter without sacrificing the interests of the children who, I believe, are in need of the love and care of their parents."

In **Kuala Terengganu**, Raja Kamarul Bahrin alleged that his two children were exposed to an undesirable environment while in Australia.

"Ian Gillespie, the stepfather, is a co-producer of pornographic film series over *Channel 10* Melbourne television and thus it is not healthy to let my children live under the same roof with him and their mother, Jacqueline," he said.

He said that among the series Ian produced was *Hard Copy*, every Thursday, at 9.30pm on *Channel 10*. The series was described by *Green Guide*, an Australian television entertainment magazine, as "nothing more than soft porn".

Raja Bahrin said his children were not happy living in Australia and had repeatedly expressed their desire to return to Malaysia to be with him.

Raja Bahrin, an architect by profession and the owner of Seni Bahri Akitek, said Jacqueline, who helped Ian produce the programmes for *Channel 10*, often left the children in the care of Ian's 15-year-old daughter, who was the pet in the house.

He claimed the children were much happier now.

On his efforts to have Jacqueline extradited to Malaysia, he said he had yet to get a copy of the police report he lodged recently.

"Jacqueline's disregard for the local law, particularly the syariah court's decision, is a serious matter. She took away the children on the pretext of visiting her grandmother on Nov 13, 1985, and was later given an interim order for the custody of the children by the Australian Family Court on Nov 28, 1985," he said.