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Judiciary

A-G ORDERS PROBE INTO POISON-PEN LETTERS AGAINST JUDGES

KUCHING, March 15 (Bernama) -- Attorney-General Datuk Mohtar Abdullah has ordered a full investigation into the circulation of poison-pen pamphlets which, he said, "ridicule, abuse and insult" judges.

"This act to ridicule, abuse and insult the Judiciary is in fact defamatory and seditious in nature with a purposive intent to undermine the stability of the nation by removing public confidence in the Judiciary," he said.

Police had received reports about the circulation of the malicious and vulgar pamphlets to judges, the legal fraternity and the public, he added.

In a press statement he read out when addressing the Judges' Conference here, he said: "There will be a thorough and intensive investigation to ensure that justice is served and that the integrity of the Judiciary is preserved."

The two-day conference, attended by 75 judges of the Federal, Appeals and High Courts, was opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

In his speech, Mohtar, a High Court judge before being appointed Attorney-General two years ago, believed the pamphlets were written by people within the legal fraternity, including judicial officers and even judges.

"Therefore, investigations will have to be directed mainly at these groups. As I stand before you today, the police have already commenced their investigations. There will be a thorough and intensive investigation to arrive at the truth in order to protect the dignity and integrity of this most honourable institution that we all serve," he said.

He added that police were interviewing witnesses who would include lawyers and secretaries to judges as well as their officers and staff.

"Some of you may be interviewed to assist the police in their investigations. I am therefore urging all of you to support and assist this investigation wholeheartedly and without reservation," he told the judges.

Mohtar, who is also Public Prosecutor, said he needed the cooperation, indulgence and forbearance of the judges in the probe.

He assured them that the action was not meant to intimidate the Judiciary or interfere with its independence.

"We will not abuse the powers of investigation. We have to be thorough to seek the truth. The investigation is aimed at striking at the venomous elements who are out to discredit the Judiciary and subvert justice in our beloved country," he said.

He vowed to cleanse the Judiciary and the legal profession of "treacherous" elements who, by their vile, insidious, devious and scurrilous allegations in the pamphlets, sought to undermine the integrity of the Judiciary and the administration of justice in the country.

Mohtar also called on the judges attending the conference to unanimously condemn the poison-pen pamphlets and their authors and to support wholeheartedly the ongoing investigation.

He was confident that those responsible, whoever they are, could be brought to justice. -- BERNAMA

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