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Dr M: Motives of observers questionable

PETALING JAYA, Tues. - Attempts by international observers to be accorded special status during the on-going court proceedings involving Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim have put their motives in question.

"These observers appear to be here not to watch the trial but instead they seem to be putting the courts and judges on trial," Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said this when asked to comment on criticisms hurled against High Court judge Datuk Augustine Paul for denying foreign human rights groups and a United Nations Special Rapporteur special observer status during the trial.

"This is undue pressure on our judges..."

"They (the observers) shouldn't come here to oversee the judge," he said.

The Prime Minister was speaking to the media after witnessing Airod, Malaysia's aerospace maintenance and modification facility, accorded the ISO 9002 quality system certification by the French-based Bureau Veritas Quality International. (Please see Page 17).

The certification is for the quality provision of aircraft maintenance, overhaul and rectification.

The ceremony, held at Airod's facility in Subang, coincided with the company handing over Boeing 757/767 aviation components to Japan's Shinmaywa and rocket booster components to United States Macnab Manufacturing Inc.

In Washington, State Department spokesman James Rubin had yesterday questioned why diplomats and journalists who had complied with procedures for entering the courtroom, were prevented from doing so.

"They (the observers) can come here and if they can get a seat, they are free to follow the proceedings," Dr Mahathir said.

"There's no need for special status as observers."

"It seems they (the observers) are so superior they know how justice should be administered... that they must oversee our judges."

Dr Mahathir said their actions seemed to question whether Malaysians know how to administer justice or not.

"We are also doubtful about their own standards of justice in their own countries."

"People are tried in the newspapers and media first, then only they appear before the court by which time the judge and jury would not have a valid opinion of their own," he added.

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