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Of matters political and legal

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MATTERS legal are not easily understood by the layman. Messing up things are statements by such as George Soros for the ouster of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the immediate release of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim now on trial.

Clearly Soros has shown his contempt and derision for the Malaysian judicial system and also members of the legal profession in this country. Coming from one who amassed his riches on the shattered lives of millions of workers given the sack in Indonesia, Thailand and other countries through his currency speculations, the call is unconscionable. Obviously he cannot forgive Dr Mahathir for vigorously attempting to stop his unscrupulous money-dealings.

According to news-agency reports, there were cheers for Soros from the university audience attending his talk in Boston. And so do we remember Ivan Buesky, the great share price manipulator on Wall Street who spoke at graduate ceremonies at American colleges. A film taken in one showed students cheering and clapping when he proclaimed, "Greed is good". He was later exposed as a crook and jailed, and the story is recorded in the Financial Times.

If Soros and his cohorts have their way they would gobble up some of the banks and financial institutions here in the name of globalisation.

Some aspects of globalisation are favoured in Malaysia until, however, they affect one's own rice bowl. Noted recently was the stand of the Malaysian Bar Council and the Malaysian Medical Association opposing liberalisation of regulations affecting the law and medical professions.

A Bernama report on it reads: "At a panel discussion, Bar Council chairman Datuk Dr Cyrus V. Das and MMA President Dr Lee Yan San voiced their opposition to Malaysia opening up the two professions to full foreign participation."

A warning was nevertheless sounded by economist Tan Sri Ramon V. Navaratnam that local lawyers and doctors be prepared to compete with their foreign counterparts since globalisation could not ultimately be stopped.

(Resisted by members of the legal profession in Sarawak and Sabah recently were calls for Peninsular Malaysian lawyers to practice freely in both States).

Other aspects of the law are revealed following the detention of former Chilean President General Augusto Pinochet for possible extradition to Spain on charges of crimes said to be committed during his rule. The arrest was carried out while he was undergoing medical treatment.

Surprising, therefore, was a demand made by two human rights organisations while 34 African heads of states attended a French-Africa summit in Paris recently. In effect they had asked the French government to begin criminal proceedings against President Laurent Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo, also present at the summit.

According to the two groups, the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues and the French League for the Defence of Human Rights, Kabila's forces had committed torture and other criminal acts.

A reply to their demand came from the French Minister in charge of relations with African countries, Charles Josselin. He reminded that Kabila enjoyed immunity "accorded to heads of states while in office".

A question asked then is whether Kabila could be detained after he

retires and thereafter be investigated and accused on charges brought by non-governmental organisations? Would there be problems if ex-President Suharto travels to Germany or Holland? And would nothing happen if rulers of former apartheid regimes in South Africa come a-visiting?

Revealing too was the admission by French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin during the French-Africa summit. He had told African leaders that the old days when France used to send in paratroopers and the Foreign Legion to prop up "friendly dictators" were gone forever. As previous administrations did when supporting Latin American dictators.

Related to all this was the decision of the British government for the early release of convicted Irish Republican Army criminals. This was done because wider reasons of Irish policy were deemed to require it. It has to do with the peace agreement on Northern Ireland.

Coming to the fore in Malaysia now are matters deemed contempt of court. Some 300 lawyers gathered recently in front of the Federal Court Building to show support for lawyer Zainur Zakaria. He had been sentenced to three months' jail by Justice Datuk S. Augustine Paul after he refused to apologise for filing an application on behalf of Anwar to remove two senior prosecuting counsel in the trial. Zainur's jail sentence was stayed pending appeal.

The lawyers wore white ribbons signifying truth and justice on the lapels of their jackets and blouses during the gathering. Question: is it normal for lawyers to demonstrate after a judge's decision on a contempt of court case?

Some 70 lawyers later called for an extraordinary general meeting of the Malaysian Bar Council.

In another case, however, lawyer Manjeet Singh Dhillon escaped contempt proceedings when he apologised in court. Paul accepted his apology without reservation and commended Manjeet for being "brave and bold" enough to apologise.

As they say in American movies: next case.

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