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Mahathir-Court

GOVT STUDYING NEED FOR LAW ON CONTEMPT OF COURT - DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 9 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the government will study the possibility of having a specific legislation relating to contempt of court.

He said the Bar Council had proposed this and the government would look into the proposal.

"We want to study this matter because while we need a law on contempt of court, there is now an abuse of the contempt of court process," he told a press conference after chairing the monthly meeting of the Umno Supreme Council.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said some politicians made strong statements in court and "use contempt of court to protect themselves".

The prime minister stressed that he was making a general comment on statements made outside the court and was not referring to any court cases including the ongoing criminal trial of his former deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"I'm not saying anything about the case of Datuk Seri Anwar. I'm talking in general on the possibility of a lawyer who is also a politician using the court to make political statements but is protected by the court," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he expected various matters to be raised in Anwar's trial "resulting in the trial not coming to an end".

This, he said, was because as long as the trial was still on "we cannot touch on (the case) at all".

"While people will become aware of the statements made in the court through newspaper reports, we cannot deny, we cannot comment, we cannot say anything about what we had read. We have to be quiet but they get political mileage from this," he said.

The prime minister said that under the existing legal system, politicians who are also lawyers could use the courts to make political statements which could not be commented on by others.

"I respect this system. They can do what they want in court and (their) statement will come out in the newspapers and we cannot comment on it. And we will respect that," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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