

10/05/1999

Lawyers hail new rule on remand extension

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - There was general agreement that police investigating officers must get written authorisation from top-ranking officers to extend the remand period of prisoners.

The Bar Council was enthusiastic with the move, saying that it was in the right direction of providing suspects their rights.

Yesterday, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Syeikh Fadzir said in Alor Star that investigating officers must get written authorisation from district or State police chiefs to obtain remand orders from courts to ensure that suspects were not detained longer than necessary.

The written authorisation applies to all detentions under Section 117 of the Criminal Procedure Code and arrests under the Internal Security Act.

For ISA arrests, only State police chiefs or the Inspector-General of Police can issue authorisation letters.

"But it would be better if it was made into law," Bar Council president R.R. Chelvarajah said.

Written authorisation, he said, was necessary because it was a police departmental matter and the court had no way of verifying the authorisation if it was not documented.

Asked if the change was initiated by the Bar Council, Chelvarajah said they would like to think their meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on March 18 had something to do with it.

During the meeting, the Bar Council submitted a memorandum to Dr Mahathir for the ISA to be repealed.

Newly-formed Malaysia Democratic Party secretary-general Wee Choo Keong proposed that Section 117 be amended to make it a law for IOs to get written authorisation.

(END)