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PM: No need for tribunal to investigate CJ's conduct

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says the criticism over alleged misbehaviour by Chief Justice Tun Mohd Eusoff Chin could be politically motivated and blown out of proportion.

"I think there is a political agenda behind this, an ill intention to put the Government and the judge at loggerheads, so that when the judge is angered, they hope the judge will make a decision detrimental to the Government," he told newsmen after returning home from a one-week working visit to Japan in Subang yesterday.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on a Malaysian Bar Council proposal to set up a tribunal or Royal Commission to investigate Eusoff's conduct following allegations against him over a holiday trip to New Zealand in 1994.

Pictures of Eusoff with lawyer Datuk V.K. Linggam, said to have been taken during that holiday, were posted on the Internet and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Rais Yatim was asked to comment about it during an interview with Australian media.

Dr Mahathir said he does not see a need to set up a tribunal to investigate Eusoff's conduct, particularly if the intention is to strip the Chief Justice of his post.

The Prime Minister said there are procedures under existing laws and constitutions that need to be adhered to with regard to the termination of service of a judge.

"I don't know whether the proposed tribunal follows the procedures of the existing laws or constitutions," he said.

Dr Mahathir also chided the Bar Council for coming up with the proposal, saying that they are the ones who criticise the Government when a judge was asked to resign.

"Previously when the Government took action to terminate the service of a Chief Justice, the Bar Council was opposed to the decision. Now they seem to be on the Government's side to champion for a tribunal to investigate the conduct of the Chief Justice.

"While some people accused that the Government did not give freedom to the judges, they (the Bar Council) seem wanting to dictate the freedom of the judges," he said.

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