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Bar Council-Law

BAR COUNCIL: NO NEED TO ENACT NEW LAW TO PROTECT EYEWITNESSES

KUALA LUMPUR, April 17 (Bernama) -- The Bar Council said today it is not necessary to enact a new law to protect eyewitnesses to crimes as there were already statutory protection afforded to witnesses.

Its President Mah Weng Kwai said Section 5 of the Abduction and Criminal Intimidation of Witnesses Act 1947 (Revised 1977) had already provide the protection for eyewitnesses to crime.

The Act provides that whoever commits criminal intimidation with intent to impede the course of justice or so that the course of justice is thereby impeded shall be punished with imprisonment which may be extended to 10 years and shall also be liable to a fine, he said in a statement.

Mah was commenting on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad statement yesterday that the government was considering drafting a law to protect eyewitnesses to crimes.

Dr Mahathir said the protection was necessary as there had been cases where important eyewitnesses were threated with dire consequences if they testified in court.

Mah said protection to witnesses also afforded under Section 506 of the Penal Code where anyone found guilty of criminal intimidation shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may be extended to two years or with fine or both.

As such, the remedy to this problem lies not with further legislation but with the police authorities carrying out their investigations properly and ensuring that those responsible are prosecuted in court, he added.

Meanwhile, DAP Deputy Chairman Karpal Singh welcomed the move, saying that the introduction of the witnesses protection Act is "a move in the right direction".

He said the Act should also encompass protection of all witnesses and not eyewitnesses alone.

Witnesses should also be provided protection to ensure the evidence they gave in court was given without fear or favour from any quarters, he added.

-- BERNAMA

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