

Lukewarm response to 8.30am court proceedings
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The earlier court proceedings starting today received a lukewarm response from deputy prosecutors, lawyers and the public.

Despite reports in the media on the judiciary directive, some members of the public and witnesses, who were met at the Jalan Duta Court Complex, said they were unaware of the change and opposed it.

On May 26, Chief Justice Zaki Azmi ordered the Magistrate's, Sessions and High Courts throughout the country to start proceedings 30 minutes earlier at 8.30am from today.

A deputy public prosecutor (DPP), in condition of anonymity, said he arrived at the High Court at 8.30am but it was not ready to convene hearing.

"This happened in almost all High Courts this morning and most of them started proceeding between 9 an 9.15am," he said.

Lawyer N Subramaniam said the court was still locked when he arrived at 8.30am and a magistrate had to seek the assistance of an interpreter to unlock it before the proceedings started at 8.45am.

Bar Council secretary George Varghese said although the council did not agree with the new operating hours of the court, it had issued a circular to about 13,000 members about the change.

He said the council raised its apprehension on the change two weeks ago to the chief justice, by raising two issues.

"Firstly, lawyers and the DPPs have to start their journey one day before their case as they also handle cases in other districts or states and this will involve higher costs to litigants.

"Secondly, the prison and the police will face logistic problems as they normally get up as early as 4.30am and the new time may complicate the situation further," he added.

However, Zaki requested for a trial period of three months as a circular had been issued, said Varghese, adding that the Bar Council would get feedback from its members and meet Zaki again to give its views.

For housewife Zaiton Atan, 27, who attended the trial of her husband in the Kuala Lumpur Magistrate's Court, she had to go out earlier and dealt with traffic congestion.

"I came either by bus or taxi. Today I left home at 7am and reached the court at 8.45am. I was reprimanded for being late " said Zaiton who live in Kayu Ara, Damansara.

Pensioner Pilus Mohamed, 63, from Kuala Pilah, Negeri Sembilan questioned whether earlier court session would mean more backlog cases could be cleared.

"Fortunately, I stay with a relative in Pantai Dalam here while attending the trial of a nephew," he added.

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