

# Dr M: Concentrate on legal matters

**PUTRAJAYA:** Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad suggested that the Bar Council become a political party as it seemed to be more concerned with political issues.

Dr Mahathir said yesterday that the Bar Council should concentrate on the profession and comment only on matters pertaining to the law.

"However, it is quite obvious that the Bar Council has become a political party.

"Next, we will have the Malaysian Medical Association and architects becoming political parties, then there will be a lot of confusion," he said after witnessing the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Perdana University, Malaysian Agriculture Research and Development Institute (Mardi) and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), near here.

His comments were the latest against the Bar Council's neutrality, which had been questioned because of its stand on the Bersih 3.0 rally.

Meanwhile, several lawyers have called for the Bar Council to undergo a transformation to preserve its non-partisan role.

They were responding to a suggestion by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz to form a law academy.

Nazri had said the law academy would be for lawyers who opposed the current Bar Council's increasingly pro-opposition stand.

Lawyer Datuk Mohd Hafarizam Harun said the Bar Council needed to undergo a major transformation process as it was now "infested with political opportunists".

"It is all right for Bar Council lawyers to have a political stand, but it is something which should be confined to their ballot papers.

"The objectives and aims of the Bar Council should not be influenced by the political views of its members."

He urged the Bar Council lead-



Former prime minister **Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad** (right) chatting with Universiti Perdana officials after witnessing the signing of a **memorandum of understanding** between the university, Malaysian Agriculture Research and Development Institute and Universiti Putra Malaysia at Yayasan Kepimpinan Perdana, near Putrajaya, yesterday. **Bernama pic**

ership to do some soul-searching.

"They need to ask themselves if this is the way they intend to represent Malaysian lawyers," Hafarizam said.

Another lawyer Saiful Adli Mohd Arshad said he supported Nazri's idea, not specifically for a law academy but the formation of a new Malaysian Bar association.

"There are many such professional bodies in the country which are

not in the political limelight, such as the Malaysian Medical Association for doctors."

Saiful Adli agreed that the Bar Council's role had become too political.

"Essentially, being political is fine but they have also begun taking sides and practising partisan politics."

He said the Bersih 3.0 resolutions passed during the council's recent

extraordinary general meeting did not reflect the views of all its members.

"If the council's 14,000 members had voted on those motions, the outcome would have been very different,"

He added that the Bar Council had pre-empted the authorities by seeking resolutions when the police themselves had not compiled a final report on the April 28 incident.