

the practice: PM

Valuation & Valuers

By KALIMULLAH HASSAN

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has directed both private and government valuers to bring property prices down to an affordable range.

Information Minister Datuk Rais Yatim told reporters that Dr Mahathir told a Cabinet meeting today that both government and private valuers were in the habit of overpricing land and houses putting them beyond the reach of most people.

Dr Mahathir directed the Finance Ministry and private valuers to ensure that such practices stopped.

Datuk Rais said the Cabinet was told that a rubber estate in Batang Kali, estimated to cost only \$30,000, was finally valued at \$90,000.

He said such practices were "happening everywhere" and involved valuers both in the government and private sector.

"The Cabinet is very concerned about this as it puts houses and land beyond the affordability of most people.

"We want the practice to stop so that people can afford to buy property," he said.

Datuk Rais said the Cabinet would wait for the results of Dr Mahathir's directive before deciding the next course of action.

In August, Finance Minister Daim Zainuddin described current property values as "ridiculous" and asked valuers to revise property appraisals in line with the weak property market.

He said valuation officers should make ap-

praisals which were correct and appropriate.

Encik Daim said that despite an oversupply of office space and drop in rentals, property values did not appear to have been affected at all.

He said the current valuations were ridiculous and unreasonable "and I hope that steps will be taken to correct the situation."

However, Encik Daim's statement was disputed by valuers who claimed there were only a few such cases.