

Crime prevention a task for all

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Crime prevention is not the sole responsibility of law enforcers as the public must realise crime is a social problem involving every member of the community, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the involvement of all members of society was needed to realise an effective crime prevention programme.

"Moral education that

starts at an early age at home must form the very foundation of crime prevention. Responsible behaviour should be instilled early among the young and impressionable age groups.

"Compliance with most laws should depend upon the acceptance of norms and concerns for the feelings of others, and not so much upon the likelihood of punishment in accordance with the laws," he said.

Speaking at the inaugura-

tion of the Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation (MCPF), he stressed that a family with strong ties and positive social values plays a crucial role in controlling the deviant behaviour of its members.

"A break in the traditional family structure and control is one of the contributory factors for the increase in the occurrence of crime. That is why we in Malaysia reject hedonism, licentiousness and unbridled individ-

ualism as a way of life."

Also present at the function were Law Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Haniff Omar, director of the Asia Crime Prevention Foundation (ACPF) Atsushi Nagashima and ACPF (Shizuoka branch) president Masumitsu Oishi.

Dr Mahathir said during this last decade of the 20th century, commercial and fraud-related crimes were becoming more sophisticat-

ed owing to the rapidly-developing computer and telecommunication technology.

He cited the drug trade which is increasingly transnational in character and called for international co-operation to overcome the problem.

The Prime Minister said he was pleased with the integrated approach taken to-

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wards crime prevention in Malaysia especially in a world of increasing crime, particularly heinous and violent crimes, as was so evident in some of the developed countries.

This, he said, was premised on the government's recognition of the need to involve all ministries and people, resulting in a relatively low rate of reported crime.

"By the standard set by Interpol, Malaysia averages not much more than 70,000 index crime a year. By the standard set by the UN Crime Commission, Malaysia averages only 100,000 reported incidents of crime yearly in a population of 18 million people with a strong element of immigrant labour and illegal immigrants.

"Of course we are not satisfied with these rates. We must strive to protect the society from any form of crime and we must get all the people involved.

"Towards this end, we need to inculcate strong moral and ethical values in our people right from their childhood."

Dr Mahathir said the global war against crossborder crimes and illicit drug trafficking needs genuine and determined efforts by all countries.

He said the speed of modern transport and communication, together with criminal ingenuity, makes accessibility to the markets and avoidance of detection much easier.

"Modern technology has made it possible for offenders to move criminal operations swiftly across frontiers and take advantage of the differences in laws, their enforcement and their jurisdictions.

"No single law enforcement agency from a single

country can respond adequately and effectively to this new challenge," he said and called for integrated efforts by national and regional law enforcers, prosecutors and judiciaries.

He stressed that the mere imposition of standards of so-called advanced countries need not necessarily yield good results since all countries have not developed to the same degree and standards economically and politically.

"In any case the crime records of advanced countries do not seem to speak well of the effectiveness of their standards.

"You must therefore forgive us if at times we feel the need to question the motive behind some of the concerted efforts by the Western world to force us to adopt its values and standards.

"We suspect, and we have reason to suspect from the events which have taken place and the many examples available, that some of the efforts are not all that altruistic," he said.

In the MCPF, he said, it was established with the aim of contributing towards crime prevention and the treatment of victims and offenders to achieve the ultimate goal of peace and stability in the country and the region.

This is to be done through survey, research, education and other programmes on the basis of solidarity and mutual co-operation among persons interested in or involved with the criminal justice system, particularly those in Asian countries.

He hoped the MCPF would promote public awareness of and participation in crime prevention in tandem with the co-ordinated efforts of government and private organisations interested or involved in crime prevention and the criminal justice system.