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Mahathir - penalties

INAPPROPRIATE PENALTIES WILL BE REVIEWED, MAHATHIR

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GENTING HIGHLANDS, April 27 (Bernama)-- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today laws which provided for penalties ~~no longer~~ appropriate to the country's present day situation will be reviewed.

For instance, he said, fines which were previously stipulated could have been assumed to be high when the laws were formulated but after the country had become more prosperous such fines were no longer found to be commensurate with the crimes committed.

"When the laws were formulated, probably there was not very much prosperity. So we had to have lower penalties. . . such matters we'll have to rectify," he told reporters after opening a seminar on business ethics organised jointly by the Harvard Club of Malaysia and Permodalan Nasional Berhad (PNB), here.

He was commenting on the views expressed by various groups that the penalties provided by certain laws were not appropriate for the offences committed such as heavier fines were imposed on a shoe thief than for a while collar of fence involving mill ions of ringgit.

Dr Mahathir said to know whether a particular law was still suitable or not, the government needed feedback from those involved in such law. -- more

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He said there was a need for feedback because the government at times was not directly involved with such laws.

Asked whether the government had received any proposals on amendments to existing laws, he said, "We hear stories but no specific proposals." "At times we are not involved in the law. It involves other people who are more aware that such laws are not effective. So we'll have to get reports," he said.

On white collar crimes in the country, Dr Mahathir said the situation was not that bad but there were already signs that were not good such as the BMF scandal and other instances in statutory bodies, the government and the private sector.

He said with an increase in the number of industries and business operations in the country, white collar crime was also on the rise. -- more

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On the possibility that existing laws were no longer adequate to prevent such crimes, he said there was no question of laws being not enough it was a matter of effective enforcement of the law.

However laws by themselves would not guarantee that no crimes would occur because crimes were committed not because of weaknesses in the law but because of mankind's greed, he said.

As such the important point; in checking crime was the attitude of the people towards crime itself.

If people considered crime as something very bad, the possibility was that they would not commit crime and they would also take action against those who commit crime.

"But we now find that many do not wish to intervene. If a crime is being committed we take a neutral stand. This only goes to show that we do not hold to noble values," he said.

Dr Mahathir said people's refusal to provide information and their unwillingness to become witnesses in a criminal case were obstacles to the government's efforts to check crime. -- Bernama

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