

I feel very bad, says PM on

# No sense of

# responsibility

builders' defiance of Cabinet order

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today described as greedy and irresponsible developers who defied the Cabinet's order to stop construction work on all high-rise buildings in hilly areas and ex-mining land until they are certified safe.

Commenting on reports in the *New Straits Times* and the *New Sunday Times* that several developers throughout the country continued to work despite the ban, the Prime Minister said: "I feel very bad ... They have no sense of responsibility at all. It seems that they are greedy."

"Developers have a moral responsibility but some do not. That is why sometimes we have problems when people do not follow regulations such as mixing concrete in accordance with required standards.

"We have incidents such as the collapse of buildings because there are people who do not adhere to regulations and specifications."

He said the Government would use all its legal authority to compel such developers to stop work until their projects are declared safe by an independent consultant.

If necessary, said the Prime Minister, the Government would not hesitate to formulate a new law.

"We have to do this because this concerns public interest. We cannot neglect our responsibility," Dr Mahathir said.

The investigation by the *New Straits Times* and the *New Sunday Times* soon after the Cabinet decision was publicly announced in the Press revealed that several developers, including those with links to major quoted companies, openly defied the order.

They continued to employ hundreds of workers and heavy machinery on hill slopes and former mining land.

Dr Mahathir said the Government would conduct a study to ascertain whether existing legislation and regulations empower local authorities to stop work on these projects until they are declared safe.

Speaking to reporters at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Sungai Besi on his return from a visit to Labuan, he said: "If we do not have the authority ... we have to seek it through Parliament. If there is a need, we will introduce a new law to be effective," he said, adding that the Government had to make a quick decision on the issue.

The developers were given a month from last Wednesday, when the Cabinet took the decision, to be certified by independent consultants that their projects are safe.

Announcing the decision after last week's Cabinet meeting, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, also revealed that 16 measures governing the development in hilly areas had been approved by the Government.

Anwar, who is also chairman of the Cabinet Committee on the Highland Towers condominium collapse, said the Cabinet gave priority to the immediate stoppage of all of construction activities because it wanted to be sure that they were safe.

When asked who had the authority to enforce the directive, Dr Mahathir said the decision was made by the Federal Government and in normal circumstances, the enforcement powers lie with the local authorities.