

Hill projects: Cabinet to discuss loopholes

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — The Cabinet will discuss loopholes in regulations governing development on hillsides, highlands and other sites at its weekly meeting tomorrow amid concern of environmentally-destructive projects.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the Government found that many of these legal provisions were not very "effective" as they could not be used against offenders, including in cases leading to accidents.

He said this at a Press conference after opening the Kuala Lumpur/Selangor Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry building here.

The Prime Minister was asked if he was satisfied with present regulations governing the develop-

ment of hillsides, highlands and other sites.

He said a review was necessary as the Government needed to know why such problems as the cutting of trees and into hillsides, continued despite repeated warnings from the Government, which had also drafted various laws to give more bite to enforcement measures.

Dr Mahathir said this showed there were weaknesses.

Certain departments, he added, might not have taken action because they did not know they were empowered to do so; unaware of the existence of the laws, or that they purposely did not want to act.

So, the Government must study why problems persisted despite policies and laws, he added.

The Prime Minister was also asked to comment on the statement by Economic Adviser to the Government Tun Daim Zainuddin who expressed concern over environmentally-destructive development projects.

Daim had criticised developers and planners who associate development only in terms of skyscrapers without regard to the consequences.

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Dr Mahathir said that this was also the stand of the Government, which was disappointed with the non-compliance of directives against cutting of trees and into hillsides, in development projects.

Asked on enforcement of the laws in relation to yes-

terday's collapse of the ledge on the top floor of a four-storey building in Klang which killed two Indonesian workers, Dr Mahathir said he believed such enforcement could be brought into use.

The Prime Minister, on his return from abroad on July 4, had expressed concern over safety aspects of local buildings in the wake of the collapse of a shopping complex in Seoul.

He had said that more than 400 people were feared killed in the incident because the building was constructed without adherence to the law.

He had expressed the hope then that when action was taken against anyone found to be careless, the Government would get support from everyone including the media.

Dr Mahathir said in this context, the adherence of safety provisions by workers were also important.

He said there were many construction sites bearing signs of Safety First which did not observe the safety provisions.

Dr Mahathir said he visited the Kuala Lumpur City Centre project yesterday and went up to 60th floor.

He saw safety measures including nets installed to prevent falls and workers given hooks to assist them.

On the problems in implementing the mandatory environmental impact assessments for development of golf courses, hillsides, former landfills and examining areas, Dr Mahathir said he wanted to know the provisions that could not be implemented.