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Charter unsympathetic of the poor: Dr M

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THE United Nations Declaration on Human Rights needs to be reviewed as it holds a very unsympathetic view of the situation in developing countries, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says.

In its present form, the charter would rather see people starve, governments change and demonstrations and strikes than allow for a stable government.

"To us the welfare of our people is important. People who unnecessarily undermine peace and stability of our country cannot be allowed to get away scot-free, when the people who suffer are the poor," the Prime Minister said in Langkawi yesterday.

He said Malaysia wants to ensure that freedom of the majority is guaranteed, and not subjected to individual acts that destabilise their lives.

"The West believes that the individual is supreme, irrespective of what happens to the majority of the people. People cannot even do business or work because of so-called expressions of individual freedom," Dr Mahathir added.

He said that the good life of the majority is as much a part of human rights as individual freedom. The individual cannot claim as his right the freedom to undermine the lives of other people.

"We want to look at the whole charter. What are human rights? There are other things to human rights than mere individual freedom," he added.

Malaysia made the call for a review of the UN charter last weekend and Washington reacted with a vow to block the proposal. The US alleges that arguments advanced by Asian countries on the matter are a ploy to defend authoritarian systems of government and abuses of power against individuals and minorities.

"You know in the US the blacks and hispanics are not well-treated. Even in their due process of law sometimes you see bias, some people are extremely poor and cannot get jobs, so where is the freedom in the US?" Dr Mahathir asked.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia will have to convince its friends that there is a need for a review of the charter. So far Asean and China are supportive of the Malaysian initiative.

"We worry that large powers will put pressure on developing countries, to the extent that they are scared to state their opinion. That too is another basic human right which no longer exists, where large powers can do everything and the weak cannot do anything," he added.

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