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PM: UN should review statement on human rights

MALAYSIA may submit a proposal to the United Nations to review its Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

He said the declaration, proclaimed nearly 50 years ago, was no longer suitable today.

"I agree that a review should be carried out on the declaration which was formulated by the super powers who did not understand the needs of poor countries.

"We will study whether we could bring this (proposal on the review) up to the UN," he said when asked whether Malaysia would propose a review of the declaration to the UN.

Dr Mahathir was responding to a call made by the Economic Adviser to the Government Tun Daim Zainuddin for a review of the declaration to suit current needs.

Earlier, the Prime Minister and his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali visited Dr Mahathir's elder sister Habsah, 76, and elder brother Mashahor, 73, who are both warded at the Pusat Pakar Utara.

Dr Mahathir arrived at the Sultan Abdul Halim Airport about 11.45am and headed straight to the hospital.

Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid and wife Puan Sri Nila Anangda Manyam Keumala, State Executive Council members and State Barisan Nasional leaders were also present.

On Saturday, Daim proposed a review of the declaration which was proclaimed on December 10 1948 in the interests of all parties and as part of the on-going process of reforming the structure of the UN.

He said the review was necessary because the declaration, which to a considerable extent was determined by the super powers of that day could hardly remain valid in a vastly changed world almost fifty years later.

Members of the UN should also review whether the declaration could really serve a "common standard of achievement for all people and all nations."

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia regarded the West's insistence that developing nations conform to their high ideals on human rights, as oppressing.

He said the West was more concerned with getting votes than providing food and helping the poor.

"We (developing nations) need a Government which is stable to enable us to develop our country and provide the basic needs for our people.

"If the Government keeps changing and our focus is only on politics and people fighting for posts, the poor people would become victims," he said.

The Declaration contains 28 Articles referring to the rights of every individual, regardless of race, colour, sex or religion. They include not only civil and political rights like freedom of speech, movement and association, but also the right to work and the right to an education.

The proclamation reads:

"This universal declaration of human rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations ... that every organ of society ... shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of member states themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction."

(END)