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UN review necessary, says Dr M (HL)

Zubaidah Abu Bakar

ALOR STAR, Sun. - Malaysia may submit a proposal to the United Nations to review the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

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

"I agree that a review should be carried out on the declaration which was formulated by the superpowers which 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 that the world body review the declaration.

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

Earlier, the Prime Minister and his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed 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 at 11.45am and proceeded to the hospital.

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

Yesterday, Daim proposed a review of the declaration which was proclaimed on Dec 10, 1948 in the interests of all parties and as part of the ongoing process of reforming the UN structure.

He said the review was necessary because the declaration, which to a considerable extent was determined by the superpowers of that day, could hardly remain valid almost 50 years later in a vastly changed world.

Members of the UN should also consider 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 countries conform to their high ideals on human rights, as oppressing.

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

"We (developing countries) need a Government which is stable to develop our country and provide the basic needs of our people.

"If the Government keeps changing and our focus is only on politics and people fighting for posts, the poor will 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)

