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**Study on  
giving  
witnesses  
better  
protection**

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**SHAH ALAM:** The Government is considering a new law to better protect witnesses of crimes, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

He said some witnesses were reported to have been threatened against testifying in court.

"In view of this, the Government feels a law should be in place to ensure witnesses are given adequate protection.

"The Government is willing to consider such a proposal (by the police force)," he said yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said the level of civic-consciousness among Malaysians was still relatively low compared to people in western countries.

"The people are not willing to come forward and provide information even though they have witnessed a crime."

Deputy Inspector-General of Police Datuk Mohamad Jamil Johari said the proposed law was expected to be similar to that of the US witness protection programme.

"We are concerned (about the witnesses) and there have been cases where witnesses changed their minds after being intimidated or harassed.

"We need to protect the witnesses. That is why a team is studying the matter and drafting the proposed legislature," he added.

It is learnt that the proposed law would be known as the *Witness Protection Act*.

The US programme, among other things, provides a witness with a new identity to safeguard the person and his or her family.

It is also learnt that the Malaysian version of the *Witness Protection Act* would include round-the-clock protection for the witness and other measures to suit the Malaysian environment.