

26/07/2001

Cabinet meeting on youth issues

Sarban Singh

PUTRAJAYA, Wed. - The Cabinet today decided to devote its weekly meeting on Aug 8 solely to discuss issues plaguing youths, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the meeting was necessary as there was an increasing trend of youths getting distracted from their studies and getting involved in unproductive activities.

"We have been discussing (youth problems) them ... it is not confined to black metal but the criminal tendencies of youths these days.

"Generally, the problem with the young people is that they are easily diverted from their studies and get themselves involved in very unproductive activities."

Dr Mahathir had been asked whether the Cabinet had discussed the involvement of youths in the black metal group.

He was speaking after attending a briefing on programmes conducted by the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology here.

Asked whether the Cabinet was open to views from non-governmental organisations and other interested parties to address the issue, he said several women's organisations have already submitted their proposals.

"We will take them into consideration. The special Cabinet meeting is not supposed to be a consultation with anybody.

"It's a Cabinet discussion confined to Cabinet members on a particularly grave issue," he said.

Dr Mahathir was also asked on efforts being taken by the Government to counter the effects of the "technical recession" being experienced by Singapore.

"We are looking at what is happening in Singapore and studying how it will affect us.

"We are taking counter measures ... and we have already injected additional funds to stimulate the economy," he said.

Dr Mahathir said as additional measures, the Government would identify new export markets and new manufacturing activities which could be undertaken by local manufacturers.

"In fact, I am meeting a whole lot of Malaysian manufacturers of electrical appliances, and probably furniture makers to talk to them about what they need to do now and what are the markets they should focus on.

"We find that the Middle East has tremendous potential. They are getting to know us better ... they now look to Malaysia as a country that can provide them with many things," he said, adding that Malaysian companies have also been invited to build and operate ports in the region.

Asked to elaborate on the Government's move to acquire the Putra and STAR light rail transit systems, Dr Mahathir said it was still fine-tuning the terms and conditions for the acquisition.

Asked how the Government would raise funds for the RM6 billion acquisition, Dr Mahathir said that was not a problem as Malaysia was still credit worthy.

"There are many ways of raising funds for the Government ... the Government is still credit worthy. We will not have any problems raising money," he said.

On a report in the latest edition of the Far Eastern Economic Review which said Dr Mahathir was getting "almost frantic in his efforts to wrangle an invitation to visit the White House", he said in jest: "Yes,

yes, yes, off course I am trying very hard. You can see me trying very hard."

The magazine said Dr Mahathir was so desperate to get an invite to visit the United States that he had sent three envoys to Washington - former Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin, Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and former United Nations General Assembly president Tan Sri Razali Ismail.