

Dr M: Some truth to claims about CBT cases

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KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad agrees there is some truth to claims made recently by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim that government enforcement agencies had sat on high-profile cases involving criminal breach of trust.

"Some of the things that he brought up are based on facts and I will look into them," he said, adding that he was briefed by Dr Rais at yesterday's Cabinet meeting.

The Prime Minister said the point brought up by Dr Rais was that there were many high-profile cases highlighted by the media which made some prominent people seem guilty.

Yet, he added, the progress of the investigations had not been made known to the public.

"By right, if these people had been found innocent, then the public should be informed accordingly," he told reporters after presenting his keynote address at the International Real Estate Federation World Congress 2002 here.

Last week, Dr Rais said that his ministry had received feedback from the public that 21 cases had been investigated for a long time but had not been brought to court, nor were their progress made known to the public.

Dr Mahathir also questioned the manner the media played up certain cases.

"For example, the case involving someone who is a criminal. Everyone knows that he is a criminal but when he returned to the country, he was welcomed by the media like a hero and given preferential treatment.

"We know that this man is a criminal who ran away from the country several years ago and was afraid to return home for fear of being arrested and prosecuted. Yet, the media was all over him, reporting that he plans to do this and that."

Asked whether he was referring to former chief executive officer of Promet Bhd, Datuk Soh Chee Wen, who returned to Malaysia two weeks ago to face two charges of defrauding the now defunct Omega Securities Sdn Bhd, Dr

Mahathir said:

"I don't know. You can make your own guess and your guess is as good as mine."

On his June 7 visit to the Vatican to meet Pope John Paul II, the Prime Minister said it had been endorsed by the Cabinet.

He said apart from the Palestine issue, his talks with the Pope would touch on the image and standing of Islam in the world community and Muslim and non-Muslim relations.

The Malaysian Trade Union Congress and the DAP, in separate statements, welcomed the Prime Minister's papal visit.

In Kota Kinabalu, the 31st Parliament and State Assembly Speakers Conference yesterday passed a resolution welcoming the visit.

Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tun Dr Mohd Zahir Ismail said: "We are happy with the invitation. It is a good gesture as it shows recognition by the world to Dr Mahathir as a leader who is sincere and able to work towards international peace."