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Council officers warned (HL)

Firdaus Abdullah

PUTRAJAYA, Mon. - Local council officers who shirk their responsibilities, especially in providing services to the public, will be replaced, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad warned today.

The Prime Minister said they were duty-bound to serve the people while adhering to the rules and regulations.

The Government, he said, would scrutinise the increasing number of complaints against local councils.

"Yes, we will have to look into this because there have been a lot of complaints against local councils. If they are not performing, then we may have to change the representatives.

"Some representatives want to be popular (and) do not want to collect taxes (while) others are not providing proper services to the people," Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said after attending the third session of the 2004 Budget dialogue with non-governmental organisations and government agencies.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on recent statements against the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim and Deputy Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk M. Kayveas.

Both had urged the council to carry out their responsibilities well in the face of complaints by residents.

Rais reminded local councils yesterday that they existed for the people and not the other way around. He had said that some local councils, including the MPAJ, had forgotten the reason for their existence.

On the crackdown against pirated and pornographic video compact discs, he said police should carry out continuous operations nationwide because enforcement activities, including against illegal electronic gaming machines, illegal immigrants and vice, should not be seasonal.

"This is a continuous thing. The moment you relax, they will come back. So the police will be asked to continue with the action all the time," the Prime Minister said when asked if he was satisfied with recent round-the-clock operations.

He said the public should provide information to the authorities.

"I also ask for the co-operation of the public, sometimes there is information that we need to know to take action. If the information is provided we will take action."

Asked why it required the Prime Minister to assume the task of ensuring strict enforcement against such problems when there were ministers and other senior officials entrusted with the job, he said it was his duty to do so.