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Workshops to help define scope, duties of enforcement officers

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The Government will soon organise workshops for enforcement officers to help them work within the scope of the law and not to be overzealous when carrying out their duties, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said while working hard to carry out their duties, enforcement officers sometimes got carried away and ended up doing "embarrassing things".

He cited the incident in Ipoh where city council enforcement officers issued summonses to couples who were holding hands in public.

Abdullah said when the officers were more aware of the scope of their duties, they could carry out their jobs better, adding that it was dangerous when the enforcement officers became overzealous.

He said representatives from all the agencies with enforcement units, including the police department and the Attorney-General's Chambers, would be called for a preliminary discussion on the mechanics of the workshops.

"The officers need to be updated and refreshed on the laws governing their scope of work," said Abdullah, who is also the Home Minister.

He said the workshops were also to remind officers not to be complacent.

"They must be consistent. They see the whole of Asia adopt democracy, it is a fact that the West took 200 years to make democracy work. Their initial democracies could hardly be called democracies today. The liberal democracy that we see in the West today had evolved over many decades.

"Countries in Asia and other parts of the world which had never known democracy need not go through the same evolution of 200 years. But neither should they adopt the democratic system overnight. When forced to do so, they will become disoriented and become anarchic rather than democratic," Dr Mahathir said.

He also remarked that there is a naive belief and even insistence that the destruction of a country because of democracy is better than the stability and prosperity resulting from a non-democratic system.

And so today war and conquests are considered legitimate if it is to force a country to adopt a democratic system of government, he said.

"We seem to have gone overboard with democracy. There is obvious fanaticism not too different from the religious fanaticism of old when wars to spread religions were considered right. We condemn those religious wars but we cannot condemn the ideological democratic wars of today," he said.

In expanding on his talk titled "Genesis of a New Asia Order," the Prime Minister proposed that Asia devise its own financial and economic institutions in keeping with its values and needs. Asian countries are neither at the same stage of development, nor do they have the same culture and values.

He said that a single currency is not for Asia for a very long time to come but a trading currency can be devised which relates to the other trading currencies of the world and Asian currencies should each have its own exchange rate against the trading currency.

Dr Mahathir also suggested an Asian trading group be formed. While not being rigid, it should be intended to help the poor countries obtain reasonable prices for their export, while paying equally reasonable prices for their imports.

In conclusion, Dr Mahathir said: "In a hundred years' time, the world

will be more multiracial. People are more mobile and borders cannot stop them. Europe and America will have huge Asian populations. And they will claim their rights. This is inevitable.

"But if Asia can grow and prosper, migration will be slower and adjustment can be made without too much disruption. As no country in the world will be single-ethnic, the mixture of races in every country will reduce the possibility of any one race dominating the world.

"Asia must be prepared for this change in the 21st century. The new Asian Order must be premised on this change... where national loyalties will be tempered with a commitment to internationalism," he said.