

Closer scrutiny over secondhand dealers
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The theft of cables, manhole covers and steel-plates is so rampant throughout the country that the internal security ministry is expediting amendments to the Secondhand Dealers Act 1946 to deal with the situation.

Some 2,267 cases of theft were reported last year, causing a loss of almost RM34.6 million. In January this year, 128 cases were reported, with the loss estimated at RM3.3 million.

Deputy Minister Fu Ah Kiow, who provided the data, told Parliament this morning that a review of the Act is at its early stage.

"Once the Act is amended, it will include Sabah and Sarawak - now it applies to only Peninsular Malaysia," he said during the Question session.

"Under the Act, licences to secondhand dealers can be issued by the police, but can only be revoked by the chief minister of a state or the minister for the federal territories."

With the amendment, the police will also be authorised to revoke the licences, he said.

He was replying Richard Riot Jaem (BN-Serian) who asked the internal security minister to state what action was being taken to curb the stealing of manhole covers and cables.

Fu said the ministry has taken several steps, among which was the formation of a special committee within the police force.

"The committee works at two levels. At the Bukit Aman police headquarters, it is chaired by the director of the crime division, while at each police contingent it is chaired by the crime division chief," he explained.

Additionally, the ministry is collaborating with the police, local authorities and affected utility-providers like Tenaga Nasional, Telekom, Indah Water Konsortium and Syabas to solve the problem.

Kelantan recorded the highest number of cases (408), followed by Sabah (361), Negri Sembilan (320), Sarawak (222) and Selangor (202).

Fu said offenders can be charged under Sections 379 and 380 under the Criminal Procedure Code.

Section 379 provides for a maximum jail term of seven years, a fine, or both. Under Section 380, those convicted are liable to a jail sentence not exceeding 10 years, a fine or both, and four strokes of the rotan.

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