

Empowering citizens

PM: New law being considered to act against snatch thieves

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — The Government is considering a law empowering citizens to act against street felons such as snatch thieves, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

"I am looking into how to beef up the legal provisions to authorise citizens, to a certain degree, to assist the police in curbing crime," he said, commenting on the recent upsurge in snatch thefts.

The Prime Minister said here that he would discuss the matter with the Cabinet and would ask the Attorney-General's Chambers to draft the proposed law, to be tabled in Parliament as soon as possible.

Abdullah said the incident of a snatch theft suspect being assaulted by several people in Klang last Saturday showed that public anger was at-its height.

However, he said, although this reflected the people's awareness of their responsibility to help reduce crime, they should not take the law into their own hands.

The snatch thief beaten by the group in Klang died in hospital yesterday after falling into a coma.

Citizens, Abdullah said, "should not resort to actions that will cause other problems and be the ones to face the consequences".



FRIENDLY PRESENCE: Constable Zainuddin Mohd Zaidi chatting with tourists at Jalan Bukit Bintang yesterday. — NST picture by Mohd Razli Bujang

"Public awareness in curbing crime is a positive development, but it must be pursued within the scope of the law. They can hand over the snatch theft suspects to the police in accordance with the process of law in the country."

Last Sunday, CID Director Datuk Musa Hassan said that witnesses to snatch thefts could make citizens arrests of the culprits.

Musa said they could apprehend offenders or obstruct them from escaping, and subsequently hand them over to the police.

During the first four months of the year, a total of 4,511 cases of snatch theft were reported throughout the country.

Last year, 15,798 cases were reported, compared with 14,640 cases in 2002. Bernama