

'Laws must be reviewed to protect the innocent'

The Star - 4/12/2019 PG-2

KUALA LUMPUR: There must be a review of laws such as the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (Sosma) to differentiate between minor offences and those posing a threat to national security, says Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"In implementing the law, powers need to be given to those responsible for implementing it and in this case, it is the police.

"The police are responsible for gathering clear evidence before taking action under the law, including Sosma.

"However, we feel that the law is incomplete as it is unable to differentiate between light and serious offences," he said when answering a supplementary question raised by Datuk Seri Dr Edmund Santhara (PH-Segamat) during Question Time in Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Dr Mahathir added that Sosma was generally used to detain those involved in terrorism-related activities such as equipping themselves with explosive devices or planning murders.

But he said there may be instances where a person was trapped into posing for a photograph with an individual who would later be identified as a terrorist.

"This is not the person's fault as he doesn't even know the individual at all.

"Or if the person makes a donation of between RM200 and RM300, which is insufficient to bring down a government.

"That is why we are reviewing the law (Sosma) as we need to differentiate between light offences and those that threaten national security," Dr Mahathir said.

Santhara had raised the recent detention of 12 individuals under



Fielding the press: Dr Mahathir addressing reporters during a press conference at the Parliament building in Kuala Lumpur. Looking on are Liew (left) and Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Amiruddin Hamzah. — Bernama

Sosma for alleged links to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

He suggested that the Home Ministry come out with guidelines so that the public would not end up being detained under Sosma after unknowingly making donations to such groups.

To a question by Datuk Seri Dr Wee Jock Seng (BN-Tanjung Piai), Dr Mahathir said he had a change of heart about draconian laws after listening to the people and lawmakers.

"I have listened to the reprimands and criticism of many.

"The government is of the view that such laws need to be reviewed so that innocent people are not subjected to them," he said.

Wee asked Dr Mahathir why he held a different view now on such laws compared to his previous term as prime minister.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir said Pakatan Harapan was committed towards its promise to review draconian laws.

He listed the Sedition Act 1948, the Prevention of Crime Act 1957, the Printing Presses and Publication Act 1948, the National Security Council Act 2016 and Sosma as laws that were currently under review, though he added that any amendments or abolishment of such laws should be done carefully.

He said this was necessary to strike a balance between protecting national security while ensuring that it was not abused or used against the innocent.