

We have never abused ISA, says Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — The Government has never abused the Internal Security Act (ISA), Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad told the Dewan Rakyat today.

"This is evident by the fact that the Government is re-elected in every election," the Deputy Prime Minister said in reply to Wan Ahmad Najib Mohamad (NF-Pasir Puteh).

Earlier, replying to Mr. Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Petaling), Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir said the Government had no intention of amending the ISA.

He said ministerial and judicial powers were different and the powers under the act were executive powers bestowed upon a minister.

Mr. Lim had asked whether the Government would consider amending the ISA to subject ministerial powers of detention to judicial supervision and control.

This would ensure that

there would be no ministerial abuse of power for political or other purposes unrelated to national security, he said.

Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir said the Government was not opposed to legal safeguards against abuses of power.

"The present laws are adequate; if the people feel that there are abuses of power, the issue can be settled democratically," he said.

Prevention

He said the Government needed to check activities that could threaten national security, besides taking action against those who had already committed offences against the nation.

The Government had to resort to preventive measures, he stressed.

"How can we provide evidence when the offence has not been committed yet?" he asked.

"If we wait until the offence has been committed, it may be

too late for us to restore peace and order."

Furthermore, he added, many criminal charges in court could not stick for lack of evidence.

Weaknesses in the law should not pose difficulties in the preservation of national security, he said.

He said those without power who criticised the Government for alleged abuses could be heartless when they gained power.

"This has been happening everywhere," he said.

He also said most democratic countries had laws similar to the ISA.

Replying to Mr. Chan Teck Chan (DAP-Kota Melaka), Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir said politicians, too, could sometimes pose dangers to the nation.

Mr. Chan had asked whether the Government was aware that politicians who criticised government policies were detained under the ISA and that the detentions amounted to abuse.