

Dr M: We have nothing to hide

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By HARJIT SINGH

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — The Government is constantly reviewing the Internal Security Act (ISA) but has to-date found no reason to make it less stringent, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"If we find that there is no reason for having such a harsh law, we will do away with it.

"However, if we find there is a need for more harsh measures, we will consider enhancing the law," said the Prime Minister at a Press conference

after he had met the seven lawyers from the overseas legal action groups.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the lawyers were given all the facilities to see the situation in the country "as we want to show the world we've nothing to hide."

Victims

He said the lawyers explained to him that they were here not to pass judgment but to find out what the actual situation was.

"They expressed their concern for the people who have been sentenced to death and for those who are detained under the ISA without trials."

He said the lawyers were of the opinion that "what we are

doing is not in conformity with fundamental human rights.

"Therefore, they said, we should consider choosing another law or modifying the law so it is not so harsh.

"I told them we are very concerned about the rights of Malaysian citizens who are threatened by people who do not care for the life and safety of ordinary citizens," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said.

He said he pointed out that human rights groups should not only look after the human rights of people who have been sentenced to death but also people who are victims.

"There are 365 Malaysians who have lost their arms, legs and eyes because of activities of the terrorists who are supported by some people arrested and sentenced under the

ISA.

"There has been no interest in these people who have been victims of the terrorists but they (the seven lawyers) only went to visit people detained and those who have been sentenced."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said it was wrong for human rights groups to say that the abolition of the death sentence constituted a part of human rights.

"This would amount to pushing on others their definition," he added.

Malaysia, he said, would continue to have the death penalty as it was necessary in view of the security situation in the country.

"We don't enjoy taking anybody's life. But, unfortunately, it is necessary to protect other peo-

ple's lives," he said.

He admitted that the ISA was harsh, which he said, was known by the people.

"Those who break it, will have to face the consequence," he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the Government could also not afford to relax the ISA as chances are, those who are guilty would go away.

On why the Government allowed this group of lawyers to visit the detention camps and also to meet him and his deputy, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said:

"We wish to give them a chance to see for themselves the situation here.

"If they want to pass judgment, they can. We can't stop them.

"We want to show the

world we've nothing to hide," he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the Japanese lawyer in the group had said that if Malaysia was to continue to carry out the death sentence of people sentenced to death under the ISA, the friendly relations between Japan and Malaysia could be affected.

"I got no such view when I met Japanese government officials ... maybe he (the lawyer) has more influence on the Japanese than the Government," he quipped.

On whether Malaysia would consider the views of the group, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said:

"We have our own responsibility to our people and we cannot be responsible to the rest of the world.

"Our country's security is our prime concern," he added.