

Dr M: We'll use ISA to stop racism

THE Government will not hesitate to detain anyone, including members of Barisan National component parties and the Opposition, under the Internal Security Act (ISA) if they fan racial hatred among the various communities.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in issuing this warning, said the Government would have to invoke its powers under the ISA if politicians raise sensitive matters and racial issues for political advantage.

Winding up the debate on the Internal Security Act (Amendment) Bill, Dr Mahathir said the Government would, however, not abuse powers provided

under the Act.

He said all detentions would be based on police reports before the detention orders are signed by the Home Minister.

"Detentions will not be carried out indiscriminately because detention orders are only be made after detailed studies based on police investigations and recommendations.

"We do not detain people because they criticise the Government. Opposition MPs and others are continuously criticising the Government. We read about it in the papers everyday.

"Only if they threaten national security and stability will we take preventive measures,

including arresting them under the ISA," he said.

The Dewan Rakyat passed the Bill after debating it for four days. When it was put for block voting after the second reading, 93 MPs supported it while 26 opposed with one absence.

The amendment is aimed at removing all forms of judicial review over detention orders under the Internal Security Act (ISA) except on procedural requirements.

Dr Mahathir said the Government had to detain those suspected of being a threat to national security during "Operasi Lalang" in October 1987 to avoid racial riots.

He said there was much tension in the country at that time after Opposition members had raised racial and sensitive issues.

He said the Government did not want to see innocent people becoming victims because it was slow to act.

"The Government cannot allow dead bodies everywhere before it decides to act," he said.