

15/10/1998

Government advised to retain ISA, says Dr M

Ashraf Abdullah; Sa'odah Elias

SHAH ALAM, Wed. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the authorities responsible for national security had advised the Government to maintain the Internal Security Act although he had earlier proposed that it be abolished.

He said security authorities felt that the ISA should not be abolished as yet because the country was not ready.

Dr Mahathir said he had earlier proposed that the Act be abolished because he felt that the country was now peaceful and that Malaysians had reached a certain level of maturity.

The Act, he said, could be abolished if the people were willing to abide by the laws.

Otherwise, he said, it would have to remain in force to prevent the country from falling into a state of anarchy.

"And today, we see that there are still people in the country who like to cause public unrest.

"To them, what they are doing is just demonstrating against the Government. But they do not realise that their actions have caused hardship to the people as their livelihood is affected by the public unrest."

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters after opening the national-level Unity Day celebrations at Dewan Jubli Perak.

He said the demonstrations and public unrest caused by these groups had affected the livelihood of small traders because they could not carry out their business.

He said tourist arrivals had also dropped by 25 per cent and this had caused problems to the hotel industry.

Dr Mahathir said the foreign media, which took advantage of the situation, continued to carry reports which suggested that there were perpetual riots and demonstrations in Malaysia.

"Foreign media are liars. I have seen the pictures of American President Bill Clinton with Monica Lewinsky at least a thousand times.

"They also continue to show footage of the haze and riots in Malaysia."

Asked why the Government continued to be lenient with the foreign media, Dr Mahathir said:

"Well, they are very powerful. Might is right. When you have the power to bash people, you bash them."

On why the foreign Press in Singapore did not file adverse reports about the republic, Dr Mahathir said they were afraid to do so. "We are softer."

On whether he had received the preliminary report on the investigations into Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's claims that he was assaulted by the police, Dr Mahathir said the report would be sent directly to the Attorney-General.

On the impending air strikes by Nato against rump Yugoslavia, Dr Mahathir said he did not think that Nato would do so because the oppressed people of Kosovo were not of the same religion.

"They will say they will strike ... but only up to that," he said.

The Prime Minister said he believed Nato would allow the killing of Muslims in Kosovo to continue.

Nato had agreed to postpone air strikes by four days to enable international inspectors to confirm that Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic had carried out his pledge to withdraw his forces from Kosovo.

Asked whether he would appoint an acting Home Minister when he leaves for Japan tomorrow, Dr Mahathir said: "I don't need to. I have (two) deputies (Datuk Mohd Tajol Rosli and Datuk Ong Ka Ting). The Finance Ministry will be looked after by the Second Finance Minister (Datuk Mustapa Mohamed).

(END)