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People who rapped Gore `real heroes'

reports on "Dewan Rakyat" by Alex Choong; Shahrum Sayuthi
DEPUTY Home Minister Datuk Ong Ka Ting said the overwhelming criticisms against United States Vice-President Al Gore for supporting the reformasi movement indicated that the majority of people approved of the Government's handling of the issue.

"Those who stood up to defend the country from outsiders' interference were the genuine Malaysian heroes," he said, in reference to Gore's description of reformasi demonstrators as "the brave Malaysians".

He was replying to a supplementary question from Wan Hanafiah Wan Mat Saman (BN-Pokok Sena).

He said supporters of removed Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had crossed a dangerous level, as some were seen carrying placards urging the orang putih to arrest Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Replying to the original question from Mohd Jamil Wan Mahmood (Pas-Tumpat), he said: "Malaysia is not a fascist country, despite the existence of the Internal Security Act.

"Allegations that the Government has abused the Act to curb the reformasi movement was actually made by outsiders and a small segment of Malaysians who were politically motivated."

Ong also did not rule out the possibility of the reformasi movement receiving finance from abroad as two of the seven people arrested following the demonstration at the Kuala Lumpur City Centre on Sunday were foreigners. He said the fact that none of those detained during the reformasi demonstrations were put under the ISA was evidence of the Government's discreet use of the Act.

To a supplementary question by Dr Tan Seng Giaw (DAP-Kepong), he said there were now 148 people detained under the ISA.