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Mahathir-ISA

POLICE HAVE GOOD REASONS FOR ISA ARRESTS, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he believed that the police have good reasons to arrest several people recently under the Internal Security Act (ISA).

He said such arrests were usually done for the purpose of questioning in connection with activities prejudicial to the nation's security.

Speaking to reporters after chairing the National Information Technology Council meeting at the Prime Minister's Department here, he said the police acted according to their own assessment.

On Sunday, police arrested sacked Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim for instigating rioting by his supporters after leading a rally at the National Mosque here.

Several others linked to Anwar's "reformasi" (reform) movement, including Umno Youth Chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and four top leaders of the Islamic Youth Movement of Malaysia (Abim) were also arrested under the ISA in the last three days.

Dr Mahathir, who is also the Home Minister, said the illegal rallies organised by Anwar's supporters had to be stopped to prevent racial riots.

He said this when asked whether public rallies would lead to racial riots.

"If we're responsible people we have to stop them, if we allow the rallies they may develop into looting, rape and the like," he said.

He said there has always been a ban on public rallies in Malaysia and not only now.

When Anwar was doing it, he was breaking the law, the prime minister said.

The police were quite lenient when they allowed Anwar to hold rallies but the foreign media wanted the police to be violent, he said.

Dr Mahathir said Anwar's supporters were aware that if they resorted to violent resistance, the government would have to employ high-handed measures to stop them to the delight of the foreign media.

He said Anwar's supporters had desecrated mosques and were sacrilegious to Islam as well as trying to incite the people to revolt with the aim of creating riots like those seen recently in Jakarta.

"They reckon that if this is achieved the government is toppled and as such no trial can be held," Dr Mahathir added.

Anwar, who is currently detained under the ISA for threatening national security, has been implicated in at least two sexual offences when two men last Saturday confessed in court that they had allowed themselves to be sodomised by the ex-DPM, an offence under Section 377D of the Penal Code.

The Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Noor said today Anwar would be charged in the open court soon over the allegations arising from the book "50 Dalil Mengapa Anwar Tidak Boleh Jadi PM" (50 reasons why Anwar cannot become PM).

Abdul Rahim said Anwar would get a fair trial as required by country's judicial system and Anwar's lawyers would be allowed to see him in due time.

-- BERNAMA

RAZ ES rn