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Recent events show that the ISA is still needed: PM

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RECENT events show that the Internal Security Act (ISA) is still necessary to ensure peace and harmony in the country, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says.

The Government was in fact considering repealing the ISA but those responsible for maintaining national security advised against it, he said.

"I wanted to repeal the ISA and even made a proposal," The Prime Minister said, adding that this was because he saw that the country was peaceful and the people appeared matured enough to adhere to the laws.

"As can be seen now, it is clear certain quarters want to cause problems in the country," he told newsmen after launching the National Unity Day celebration in Shah Alam yesterday.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Home Minister, was asked to comment on the Malaysian Bar Council's resolution calling for a repeal of the ISA.

"They prefer mob rule and street justice... through show of might and chaos... rather than the rule of law to resolve problems," he said.

Those involved in demonstrations might think it was democracy, he said, but for the majority of Malaysians the disturbances had caused a lot of problems.

"Their incomes were affected... the petty traders were unable to run their business, and the tourists would not come to Malaysia. The foreign media meanwhile ran scenes of demonstrations as if they were happening everyday in Malaysia," he added.

Malaysians who are unhappy with the present Government and leaders should use the proper means to resolve their grievances, not by organising demonstrations and illegal rallies or cause riots, Dr Mahathir said.

"They can choose others to run the Government when election comes ... if they are not happy with certain laws, including the ISA, they can get their elected representatives to repeal or amend them," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysians of various communities, cultures and religions have been united for years and this was amply demonstrated during the 16th Commonwealth Games last month.

On news that Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was released from ISA detention yesterday, Dr Mahathir said: "That is his right."

Asked about the investigations into Anwar's allegations that he was beaten while in police custody, Dr Mahathir said they were on-going and when completed the findings would be submitted to the Attorney-General.

Earlier, in his speech, Dr Mahathir said democracy does not develop on its own. The people have to understand and strive for it.

"Malaysians must realise that the peace we enjoy today did not come just like that ... it is something which we have worked hard and strive for.

"Riots, demonstrations and other unbecoming behaviour are not our way," he said.

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