

29 OCT 1998

Parliament-Debate

RETAIN ISA WITH CERTAIN AMENDMENTS, SAY MPs

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 29 (Bernama) -- A government backbencher today called on the government to retain the Internal Security Act (ISA) with certain amendments, saying the Act is the key to the country's peace and stability.

Noh Omar (BN-Tanjung Karang) said the Act, which provides for detention without trial, was crucial in restoring rule and order in the country.

He said Malaysia, being a multi-racial and multi-religious country, is vulnerable to communal and religious issues, which were highly sensitive, and could trigger chaos in the country.

The people could be easily carried away if certain groups harped on racial and religious issues, resulting in loss of innocent lives and damage to properties, he said when debating the 1999 Supply Bill at the Dewan Rakyat.

Noh spoke at length on the current political developments in the country, Malaysia's Constitution and illegal assemblies organised by supporters of sacked Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

His speech prompted several MPs to rise and seek clarifications. They are Lim Hock Seng (DAP-Bagan), Liew Ah Khim (IND-Seputeh), Mohamad Sabu (PAS-Kubang Kerian), Datuk Dr Jamaluddin Jarjis (BN-Rompin), Datuk Badruddin Amiruldin (BN-Yan), Datuk Sukri Mohamed (BN-Machang), Chang Kon You (BN-Ipoh Timur) and Karpal Singh (DAP-Jelutong).

Deputy Minister of Housing and Local Government Datuk Azmi Khalid also stood up to ask for an explanation which erupted into an argument when both of them adamantly defended their views.

Noh said there was no truth in allegations that the ISA was being retained for the political interests of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He pointed out that Dr Mahathir himself at one time proposed to abolish ISA but police voiced their disagreement, saying the abolition could pose a threat to the country's security and public order.

He urged the opposition and non-governmental organisations which pressed for the repeal of ISA to think of the consequences to the country without the Act.

Datuk Hon Choon Kim (BN-Seremban) said the government would not succeed in stimulating the economy if there was no political stability.

If street demonstrations and illegal assemblies continued, the government's efforts to kick-start the economy would be an exercise in futility, he said.

He expressed regret over the protesters' action to exploit the lantern festival procession at the Merdeka Square recently, saying the Chinese were offended by their disrespect for their culture.

Liew Ah Khim (IND-Seputeh) said the people must be allowed to gather peacefully to air their grievances.

He urged the government to designate a specific place for the people to gather peacefully, failing which the reform movement might go underground which was more dangerous.

He said he disagreed with the protesters for the violent rioting and attacking policemen in last Saturday's demonstration at Kampung Baru.

Liew also urged the government to ask banks and financial institutions to scrap late payment charges on credit card holders as many of them were facing problems to pay due to the economic slowdown.

He said banks and financial institutions should also stop the practice

of getting court orders to declare a card holder bankrupt given the unfavourable economic conditions.

-- BERNAMA

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