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PM: We will use ISA to safeguard nation's security

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight warned that the Government would use the Internal Security Act to deal with those bent on undermining the country's security and peace.

The authorities have been directed to pay closer attention on activities aimed at creating disturbances and destabilising the country, including by deviationist groups and those advocating violence to bring down the Government.

He said a lesson to be learnt from the Grik arms heist and hostage-taking incident by the Al-Ma'unah group on July 2 was that the Government should not wait for things to happen before taking action.

"The incident demonstrated to us what could happen if we relax ... despite members of the group being trained using all sorts of items and an advertisement placed in Harakah inviting people to join them, we viewed all these lightly, as if nothing bad would happen.

"But we now know the consequences of such activities," he said at a Press conference after chairing a three-hour Umno supreme council meeting at Menara Dato' Onn.

Dr Mahathir, who is party president, said the council discussed in detail the Sauk incident and the close link between Al-Ma'unah and Pas, where many of the cult's 1,800 members were also Pas members with some holding certain posts in the party.

Asked whether the Government had already resolved to use the ISA, Dr Mahathir said: "The law is there and we are not fond of using it but if we have to for security, we will not hesitate."

Action will also be taken against those trying to undermine the credibility of the army and police and by claiming that the whole incident was staged.

"This is wrong and subversive as it could erode the people's confidence in our security forces," Dr Mahathir said.

When pointed out that the use of ISA would attract criticism, especially from foreign countries, the Prime Minister replied that this was their wish.

"But the Act is part of the country's law and we have the right to use it, especially when it involves national security."

The Prime Minister said silat associations would be allowed to continue with their activities, but the Government would act as soon as there was evidence that they had deviated from their original objectives.

"It is vital for the authorities to monitor quarters advocating violence and ensure that it does not happen."

On claims that the incident was staged by the Government, Dr Mahathir said evidence obtained proved that it was baseless.

He also rebutted various claims made by Kelantan Menteri Besar and head of Pas' consultative council Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat that the robbery and the group's standoff in Bukit Jenalik with the army and police had been staged.

"Nik Aziz said it was unlikely the sentries at the army installations could be duped by the robbers as they sported goatees.

"But investigations showed that the men were clean shaven when they committed the act.

"He also expressed surprise that the soldiers failed to report the first robbery but we now know that they could not do so because the place was

only equipped with a radio, which was taken away by the group."

Dr Mahathir said Nik Aziz's contention that it was impossible for such a large number of weapons to be carted away in the three four-wheel drive vehicles used by the robbers, had been proven wrong.

"The weapons are not that many ... only the ammunition is in the thousands but these did not take up that much space."

He said investigations also revealed that the leader of the group, Mohd Amin Mohd Razali, was influenced by Pas' brand of politics, adding that his family and the area was dominated by the party.

"Obviously, he has been inspired by Pas' propaganda like Umno (members) are infidels, that Malaysia is not an Islamic country and that efforts should be made to set up an Islamic State."

Asked whether Al-Ma'unah would be banned, Dr Mahathir said the Government would not rush into making a decision without a detailed investigation.

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