

# ISA foiled illegal demo, says Dr M

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'Without instigators, Malaysians would not participate in such gatherings'

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**KUALA LUMPUR, Sat:** The detention of seven opposition leaders and activists under the Internal Security Act (ISA) has proven to have hampered the planned illegal gathering of some 50,000 people, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said the gathering in the capital today did not materialise as the leaders who were expected to instigate demonstrations had been arrested.

"I think they do not have the leaders to incite them as they have been arrested ... that is why the police acted that way," he said.

He said without instigators, Malaysians would not participate in such gatherings because they prefer to live in peace and harmony.

Mahathir said most people do not want to resort to street demonstrations but they are instigated by certain leaders.

Asked if the detention of the seven under the ISA has proven to be effective, he said yes.

"I think it has been effective because they planned to have a gathering of some 50,000 people and we also got to know that they told certain people that they wanted to have a gathering à la Indonesia ... that is through violence but it did not happen," he said after attending a Vasakhi open house celebrations at Kelab Aman here this afternoon.

Mahathir also said that he was aware that some people have gone to Indonesia to tell the people there that the Indonesian style of demonstration would be copied in Malaysia.

Several days ago, seven people, including Parti Keadilan Nasional youth chief Ezam Mohamed Nor and Keadilan vice-president Tian Chua, were detained under the ISA

on suspicion of involvement in a secret group of over 20 political activists set up to hold street demonstrations until the 2004 general election.

In **GRIK** earlier today, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the detentions of the seven were carried out in accordance with the "wishes" of the public.

He said the people want to see peace and stability maintained in the country.

"It is the government's responsibility to enforce such laws," the home minister said when officiating the Grik Umno division meeting.

"This move is not to safeguard the present leaders or the party but for the people ... in ensuring that peace in our country is not affected

by the actions of certain quarters."

Abdullah said the government will not hesitate to take the necessary action to counter any move or effort by any group which threatens peace and stability.

He also reminded Malaysians to abide by the laws to ensure continued peace and stability. "What is the use of having these laws if they are not followed by the citizens?"