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ISA arrests are to protect peace in country

Datuk Mustapa Mohamed

ALLOW me to refer to your article titled "Mahathir cracks down on crisis - Malaysian police arrest opposition leader and ban public rallies" by Rajiv Chandrasekaran in your Aug 13 issue.

While we appreciate your interest in Malaysian affairs, we feel obliged to clarify some of the points raised, or otherwise your readers - a substantial number of them are Malaysians - will be misled or even lose confidence in the credibility of your paper.

In the first place, law-abiding Malaysians are aware that the current so-called "crackdown on the critics" is not targeted at opposition party members.

Those arrested over the past week were suspected by the police of having links with a number of foreign Muslim extremist movements to bring down the Government through undemocratic means which include the use of violence.

Some members of this militant group, as your writer correctly quoted the Prime Minister, had "even tried to make hand grenades, find weapons and buy guns from other countries".

It is purely a coincidence that they are members of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party. One must not forget that there are thousands of other members of the opposition parties who are still out there vilifying the Government and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in particular day in and day out and nothing happens to them.

The so called "draconian measures" mentioned in your article are merely an exercise by the police to ensure that the security of the country is always intact so that not only Malaysians can carry out their daily business without fear but also to assure foreign investors that their investments in the country are safe.

As you are probably well aware, the Malaysian Internal Security Act, inherited from the British colonial masters, is a preventive law. It has proven to be successful in protecting peace-loving Malaysians and provide them with an abundant sense of security. It has also enabled the authorities to put off the possible security threats to the nation during its infancy.

Under the law the police are allowed to detain any suspect for a period of not more than 60 days for investigation. Only when they are found to pose a serious security threat would they then be detained further.

Your suggestion that the Government has no evidence to back up its claims is a bit premature as one of the perpetrators has already been brought to court to face trial on Aug 11. We fail to comprehend how the measures by the Government could create a tense judicial showdown and increase religious and ethnic polarisation as you suggested whence in actual fact this is what exactly the authorities are trying to prevent by taking the said measures.

As a matter of fact, the ISA has been instrumental in maintaining racial harmony, peace, stability and prosperity in the country.