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Mahathir-ISA

ISA MAY BE REVIEWED IF DEMOCRACY UNDERSTOOD

KUALA LUMPUR, April 16 (Bernama) -- The Internal Security Act (ISA) may be reviewed when the people really understood the true meaning of democracy, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"Once the people understand democracy, which means that violence is not used to overthrow the government, I think at that stage we can think of revising the law," he said after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting here today.

He said at the moment, it was quite obvious that a certain group of people thought that if they could not win an election through the ballot box, then they should try other means to overthrow the government.

"That is not democracy in our view, but of course, in the view of other people that is democracy," he said when asked if the government would release the seven people detained under the ISA recently for their alleged attempt to organise street demonstrations.

Five of the seven are from Parti Keadilan Nasional -- vice-president Tian Chua, 37, youth chief Ezam Mohamed Noor, 34, supreme council member Saari Sungip, 43, N. Gobalakrishnan 41, and Abdul Ghani Haroon, 36, -- while the two others are Free Anwar Campaign director Raja Petra Raja Kamaruddin, 49, and activist Hishammuddin Rais, 50.

On calls by certain sectors of society asking for a review of the ISA, Dr Mahathir said as a democratic country they were free to air their comments.

"But as far as we can make out, this is a minority view and we cannot take the minority view as being the view of the people of this country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said a wide spectrum of society, on the other hand, was happy with the action taken because it had helped to avoid the kind of destruction and turmoil that was happening in other countries.

"And, we know that these people have gone to another country to seek help in organising much more violent demonstrations but I think the police have nipped it in the bud," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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