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`Students involved in subversive activities won't be spared'

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad reminded students that they would not be exempted from the law if they participated in activities which threatened national security.

Dr Mahathir said it was up to the police to determine the relevant laws to be used against those who participated in such activities.

Referring to the arrest of student activist Khairul Anuar Ahmad Zainuddin yesterday, Dr Mahathir said it was more in relation to security rather than offences under the University and University Colleges Act.

"I think this is more in relation to security rather than offences under the University and University Colleges Act. It is about the country's security."

Dr Mahathir said this when asked why Khairul Anuar was arrested under the Internal Security Act and not under the University and University Colleges Act.

Yesterday, police arrested Khairul Anuar, an engineering student with Institut Kemahiran Mara under the Internal Security Act to assist in its investigations into activities detrimental to national security.

Dr Mahathir said students could voice their views but if they participate in illegal activities, then it would be an altogether different matter.

"If they obstruct other people from going about their daily business then that is a different matter entirely."

On rumours that he would make an announcement on a new economic measure and the possibility of a cabinet reshuffle which had pushed up the share market recently, Dr Mahathir said, it was up to the market to speculate.

On why he was taking a long time to appoint a new Finance Minister, Dr Mahathir said: "I don't see the urgency. The Finance Ministry is functioning quite well. You can ask the staff whether I am able to deal with the work or not."

"If they say that I have not attended to the work, then of course you may need a Finance Minister."

"You must remember that previously, I was also holding two posts at the same time - as the Prime Minister and the Home Minister."

Dr Mahathir said it was very common for a Prime Minister to hold another ministerial post.

"I'm no longer the Home Minister, I am only managing the Prime Minister's Department, so I have time to attend to other ministry's work."

However, he said, that does not mean that he was not looking at any candidate at all.

On the need for cyber laws as proposed by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Rais Yatim, Dr Mahathir said the Government would look into laws to restrict those who abused the internet by distributing misinformation and pornography.

Dr Mahathir said there was evidence that the Internet was being abused to distribute all kinds of things which undermine the moral of the society.

"The Internet must be used to enable the people to learn to get information. But it is quite evident that some people have developed the art of abusing it."

He said many countries have already enforced laws to punish offenders who commit such acts. For example in Germany the law provides that those

who abuse the Internet would be liable to be charged in court.

On whether the new law would only apply to those who distribute pornography, Dr Mahathir said that would depend on the kind of pornography.

"But if the websites kept on instigating the people because of different race and religion, action would need to be taken against them."

On the call by the Malaysian Trades Union Congress to freeze the intake of foreign workers by the private sector, Dr Mahathir said the Government had always ensured that the locals were given priority.

"We have always been cautious when dealing with the recruitment of foreign workers. We will not hesitate to take action against employers who replaced their local employees with foreigners."

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