

20 DEC 2002

Mahathir-Suhakam

RIGHTS OF THE MAJORITY MUST ALSO BE RESPECTED, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 20 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government takes into consideration the human rights of the people in implementing the Internal Security Act (ISA), and not just those of the detainees.

The Prime Minister said that if a person violates the human rights of another person, that other person will lose his basic rights.

"We must remember that the majority of the people also have human rights. If someone commits an act that violates the human rights of the majority, then he has done something that shows he has no respect for human rights.

"And if he has no respect for human rights, there is no need for us to respect his human rights," he said at a news conference after chairing an Umno Supreme Council (MT) meeting here.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on the statement by Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) Chairman Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman today that Suhakam would submit two reports on ISA to the Home Ministry next month, in which it would suggest among others that the government be more sensitive to the human rights of those detained under the Act.

Abu Talib was reported to have said that although the government needs the detention power, those who are detained must be given the opportunity to challenge accusations levelled against them.

Dr Mahathir also drew attention on an aspect of human rights in the detention of hundreds of West Asian men after they voluntarily presented themselves at immigration offices in the United States to register under new anti-terrorism rules.

"I read today...of Muslims men detained. When asked to register, they went to register and they were detained. I don't know what kind of law (they are enforcing)," said Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno President.

He said the MT also discussed a proposal by Australian Prime Minister John Howard to attack neighbouring Asian countries used by terrorists to launch attack against Australia's interest and its people.

Dr Mahathir said the MT rejected any attempt to turn the proposal into an international law.

"If the UN (United Nations) agrees to such a proposal, naturally there will be violation of freedom of other countries by major powers, and this means that there will be no respect of other country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the MT takes a serious view of the proposal by Howard because it infringes upon the independence and freedom of other countries, including Malaysia.

Asked whether Malaysia planned to send a protest note to Australia, he said the matter would be discussed at the governmental level.

Dr Mahathir also said the MT wants the United Nations to remove from its report any reference of the Barisan Nasional (BN) having connection with the al-Qaeda network, said to be responsible for the Sept 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington.

"Although they have withdrawn the allegation, we urge that any mention of the BN having connection with the al-Qaeda be expunged from the report," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the meeting also took note of the election of Roh Moo-hyun as the new president of South Korea.

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