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Rais: Thorough study of ISA needed

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KUALA KLAWANG, Sat. - A thorough study needs to be carried out on the Internal Security Act before the Government can decide whether to include the views by the Malaysian Human Rights Commission in any amendments to be made later.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim said Suhakam had submitted its proposals on the law.

"We will study all the recommendations made by the body before deciding whether there is a need to make any amendments or not."

Rais, who is also Jelebu MP, said this after flagging off some 100 participants in a walkathon organised by the Jelebu BN.

He said there were certain aspects of the Act that were critical to some quarters, including academicians. "It is normal for our laws to be criticised ... even the law on terrorism in the United States is also vehemently criticised by human rights societies."

He added that the Government would retain ISA although it had lost a few cases in the courts.

Rais was asked to comment on the statement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday that the Government had spared Malaysia from economic turmoil by observing the rule of law, while the ISA had indeed saved the nation.

Dr Mahathir also noted that the liberal West had conceded that preventive laws were necessary to safe-guard internal security.

On Sept 9, Suhakam chairman Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman said the Government should review restrictive laws such as the ISA and pass new ones as times had changed.

Abu Talib had said the changing circumstances and times had created the right atmosphere for the Government to review the ISA as such a review would be in line with changing circumstances and also prevent abuse of power.

He added that Suhakam would review the legal and procedural aspects of the ISA.

Rais today said it was normal for the people to make comparisons between human rights and preventive laws.

ISA had been proven to be an effective tool, time and again, in overcoming "physical threats" since the 1940s, he said.

Rais also said the Government would continue to use the law against politicians and the public who are out to create instability and chaos, economically and socially.