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Dr Mahathir: Government never abused ISA for power, personal gain

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The Government has never abused the Internal Security Act for power or personal interest, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said in an interview with "Buletin Malaysia", the National Security Division of the Prime Minister's Department's online bulletin.

Dr Mahathir said parties with vested interest have accused the Government of making use of the ISA to suppress its opponents, when in fact the Government had exercised caution each time the law was executed.

"Now the ISA is acknowledged as an important `preventive law' especially to curb acts of terror and many countries have formulated a similar law. But these countries have not been reprimanded for using it for their political mileage," he said, adding that in the first three years of his Prime Ministership, he released 600 detainees.

Dr Mahathir added the ISA would continue to remain relevant, as existing laws would serve to punish law offenders, but the former would help "nip problems in the bud".

"We have to put a stop to menace by all means, even before it happens. A law like the ISA, which is not blatantly used, is necessary as a preventive measure."

He said even some countries which had criticised the Government for using the ISA had, since Sept 11, drawn up similar legislation and now that these countries are threatened they admit Malaysia's decision to use the law is substantiated and valid.

The Government, Dr Mahathir added, had continuously explained to the people the importance of internal security and the repercussions of a hostile environment, especially where a multi-ethnic country is concerned.

"While we are concerned about the welfare of detainees, the well-being of the majority is also the Government's responsibility, so it cannot be compromised for them (detainees).

On the rise of minority Islamic groupings in the country that have been rallying against his administration, he said these groups had been brainwashed to act that way.

"We have no problems with them practising their religion .. but they have this mindset that Malaysia is unIslamic, unsafe and cruel. We have also noted that they are aiming for this far-fetched dream of combining an Islamic Indonesia-Malaysia-the Philippines."

He said these groups were merely living a dream as Malaysia will remain a multi racial country while the others have their own beliefs and would definitely retain their sovereignty.