

Pak Lah: ISA not ruled out
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Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today did not rule out the possibility of invoking the Internal Security Act - which allows detention without trial - against those who stoke racial tension.

Responding to a question at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur, he said: "If the (home) ministry finds it necessary, then the appropriate action can be taken."

umno ahmad ismail mt meet 100908 abdullah najib pcHowever, Abdullah did not elaborate on the issue.

The premier's remark comes amid rumours that the Barisan Nasional-led government - which is under siege and riddled with internal problems - may launch a crackdown similar to what was initiated by Abdullah's predecessor Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 1987.

The Mahathir government had then detained more than 100 people, ranging from politicians to activists, under the tough security law in a dragnet known as Operasi Lallang.

BN, which suffered its worst-ever electoral setback in the March 8 polls, is constantly being threatened by Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim who has vowed to oust the ruling coalition through defections.

The PKR supremo, who returned to Parliament after a 10-year absence, has set Sept 16 for the political coup.

However, he also said that the date may be deferred because of the unexpected twist which saw two-thirds of BN backbenchers taking a study tour to Taiwan.

In addition, the Abdullah-Najib Razak leadership is facing pressure from Mahathir as well as internal dissension within Umno.

A further blow came from Umno vice-president Muhyiddin Yassin today. The senior politician urged Abdullah to step down before the 2010 transition of power plan.

'Cause for concern'

Yesterday, the military weighed in with Armed Forces chief General Abdul Aziz Zainal calling on the government to take stern action against those who incite racial sentiments in order to prevent chaos and disorder.

The army chief drew flak from the opposition for this rare comment with PAS Youth telling him to stay out of politics.

Also expressing worry was DAP MP Charles Santiago. "The Armed Forces chief's statement should be a cause for concern for all Malaysians."

"The role of the army should be confined to the barracks. It works at the behest of the

government of the day. It should be neutral.”

On Saturday, Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar too raised the ISA spectre when he said that the preventive detention law could be used against controversial blogger Raja Petra Kamaruddin for insulting Islam and Prophet Muhammad.

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