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PM: Action based on wishes of silent majority

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KUALA LUMPUR: All the measures taken against illegal demonstrations are in line with what the people want, the prime minister said.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said this message was conveyed to him by representatives from 365 non-governmental organisations.

"The silent majority has spoken, this is what the NGOs told me. The rakyat do not like demonstrations. Peace is what the rakyat values."

Street protests, Abdullah said, disrupted economic activity.

"Such actions will affect the business of hotels, shops, restaur-

rants and taxi services. Due to street demonstrations, there are cancellations," he said after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting yesterday.

"Whatever action the government is taking is in accordance with the public's aspirations. This is to ensure our country stays safe and peaceful."

Abdullah also said that change could only be brought about by interaction through proper channels in accordance with the law.

"We hear from everyone, including co-operatives, safety and health committees and other political parties which raise issues.

"This is our way. Democracy is the best way. If there is no democracy, there is no way we can progress and ensure security for

all."

Abdullah was commenting on the demonstrations by Bersih (Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections) and Hindraf (Hindu Rights Action Force), which crippled the capital last month when thousands took to the streets.

Roadblocks were set up and some LRT stations were closed.

On Friday, Hindraf leaders M. Manoharan, P. Uthayakumar, R. Kengadharan, V. Ganabatirau, and K. Vasantha Kumar were detained under the Internal Security Act.

DAP chairman Karpal Singh has filed an application to free Manoharan on the grounds that the detention order was authorised without the 60-day investigation period.

When asked to comment, Abdullah said the detention order was valid.

"It (the 60-day requirement) is not necessary. Under Section 8(1), if the minister is satisfied that it is necessary to detain someone from acting in a manner prejudicial to the nation's security, the minister can issue a detention order directing that the person be detained."

Abdullah defended the detentions under the ISA.

"They claimed that Malaysian Indians have been subject to ethnic cleansing. It is not right. But still they spread such lies overseas. This has caused hatred and anger. The rakyat value safety and public order because they know this is the only way to achieve development."