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Dr M: I tried to scrao ISA

Cops insisted Act should stay in the books, says former PM

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KUALA LUMPUR: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he wanted to abolish the Internal Security Act (ISA) when he was prime minister, but did not do so as the police were against the move.

"I suggested that the ISA be abolished, but the police disagreed because there were still threats," he said.

"I suggested that we reduce the detention term to one year, but they also disagreed."

Dr Mahathir said the police were his advisers on national security, and "if the police said arrest, I just signed/ah."

He said the ISA itself was not bad but the abuse of it was.

"The people who criticise the ISA are criticising it because they failed to become PM.

"If you are PM, then *sedap-lah* (it's nice)," he said.

Dr Mahathir, the former Inspector-General of Police Tun



Important issue: Dr Mahathir taking his turn as a panel speaker during 'Current challenges of democratic system and Malaysian constitution towards achieving Vision 2020' programme. Also present are Hanif (right) and Dr Chandra (left).

Hanif Omar and activist and academic Prof Dr Chandra Muzaffar, were panel speakers at a programme titled "Current challenges of democratic system and Malaysian constitution towards achieving Vision 2020" at the Parliament's banquet hall.

It was attended by about 200, including MPs from Dewan Negara and Dewan Rakyat.

Hanif agreed with Dr Mahathir's remarks and said it was he who had urged the former prime minister to reconsider any plan to abolish the ISA.

"Anwar (then Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim) said we should abolish the ISA, and Dr Mahathir agreed," he said.

But Hanif said he told them to reconsider it. This resulted in then Deputy Home Minister the late Tan Sri Megat Junid Megat Ayub announcing a review of the Act.

Hanif said Dr Mahathir had consistently voiced his opposition to the ISA.

"When he became PM, Tun Musa Hitam (then Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister) told me not to invoke the ISA because the PM did

not like it.

"I told him it was not me that passed the ISA, but Parliament. I only used it to protect the country," he said.

Hanif added that he had gone to see Dr Mahathir in 1987 with then Special Branch director Tan Sri Rahim Noor to tell him of the need to make mass arrests to prevent another May 13 riot.

"The list was long, and we cut it down. But Dr Mahathir was still not happy, so we cut it down some more and that's how we got to 104 names," he said.