

Newspaper	New Straits Times
Date	13 October 2015

'Dr M used ISA to silence critics'

NST- 13/10/2015

FAIR: Minister says Khairuddin, Chang allowed to defend themselves

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TUN Dr Mahathir Mohamad had used the Internal Security Act to silence government critics during his tenure as prime minister, said Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Seri Salleh Said Keruak.

Responding to Dr Mahathir's claim that a new security law was unfairly used against two men for economic sabotage, Salleh said the former premier had used the law on dissidents and critics of the government in the past.

"In 2001, 10 of (Datuk Seri) Anwar Ibrahim's supporters were detained without trial on allegations that they were terrorists. Six were made to serve two years under detention.

"The court later ruled that they were not terrorists and that their detention was illegal," Salleh said in a statement published on his website yesterday.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir and several veteran Barisan Nasional leaders voiced out against the use of the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (Sosma) against former Batu Kawan Umno vice-chairman Datuk Seri Khairuddin Abu Hassan and his lawyer, Matthias Chang Wen Chieh.



Former prime minister **Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad** speaking out against the use of the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (Sosma) against former Batu Kawan Umno vice-chairman **Datuk Seri Khairuddin Abu Hassan** and his lawyer, **Matthias Chang**, in Putrajaya yesterday. With him are (from left) **Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal**, **Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin**, **Tan Sri Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah**, **Tan Sri Sanusi Junid** and **Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat**. Pic by Mohd Fadli Hamzah

Khairuddin and Chang were formally charged the same day with attempts to sabotage Malaysia's banking and financial systems.

Present during Dr Mahathir's press conference here were former deputy prime minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, former minister Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal, Gua Musang member of parliament Tan Sri Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, former MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat and former Kedah menteri besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid.

"Dr Mahathir said this is an abuse and disrespect of the law, and the only crime the two committed was to tell the truth. It has not been es-

tablished whether what Khairuddin and Matthias said is the truth, so let the trial determine this," said Salleh.

He reminded Dr Mahathir that people who told the truth during his administration were arrested, charged and convicted.

"For example, Marina Yusoff was convicted and sentenced under the Sedition Act in 2000 for telling the truth and the judge ruled that just because she told the truth did not mean she was not guilty of a crime.

"Under the Sedition Act, telling the truth can actually get you jailed, the court reminded the defence," he said, adding that critics of Dr Mahathir's government were detained

without trial.

"At least Khairuddin and Matthias are being allowed a trial where they can defend themselves, and if they are not guilty, then they will be freed," he said.

Barisan Nasional strategic communications director Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan, in a series of tweets, said Sosma was a better legislation than the ISA.

"People do remember his ISA and the 'colourful' 22-year tenure as PM. Enough said! Sosma is better than ISA. In fact, as former BN chief whip, TSMY (Muhyiddin) made sure all BN MPs, including the Semporna MP, voted for it in Parliament," Rah-

man tweeted yesterday.

Rahman, who is urban wellbeing, housing and local government minister, also defended the use of Sosma against Khairuddin and Chang.

"Unlike ISA, under Sosma, both Khairuddin and Matthias will see their day in court. So let the court decide if they are guilty or not," he said, in a veiled reference to Op Lalang in 1987, where 106 individuals were detained without trial.

His tweets drew the attention of other Netizens who had questioned the motives behind the charge.

To this, Rahman said that the charge was not politically motivated.

"The charge sheet clearly says the duo is charged due to economic sabotage. That means not for their political belief or activity.

"Why then (are) some people upset claiming the charge was politically motivated? That doesn't make sense to me... Unless of course, they believe the duo did it for political reasons!

"If that was true then i am afraid it would validate the suspicion of many people on the duo's intention in the first place," he tweeted.

Jaringan Melayu Malaysia secretary Hamdan Mohd Salleh said Dr Mahathir's recent statements had cast the government and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak in a negative light.

"His empty allegations against 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB), for example, is a direct personal attack against the prime minister.

"I challenge Dr Mahathir to swear on the Quran that all his claims on 1MDB are true. His act of spreading false accusations is aimed at bringing down the present government."