

**Dr Mahathir, BN leaders criticise Sosma, say used against critics**  
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Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and a few Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders today joined forces to criticise a new security law used against two men for economic sabotage, saying it is being used against government critics.

"They are defining sabotage according to their own needs," said Dr Mahathir, now a trenchant critic of the Najib administration, at a press conference in the Perdana Leadership Foundation in Putrajaya.

The country's longest-serving prime minister disclosed that former Umno branch leader Datuk Seri Khairuddin Abu Hassan and his lawyer Matthias Chang had been charged under the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (Sosma) for economic sabotage.

Also attending the press conference were sacked deputy prime minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, sacked minister Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal, Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, former MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat and former Umno leader Tan Sri Sanusi Junid.

However, Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik who had endorsed the move to criticise the abuse of Sosma, could not attend as he was overseas.

Khairuddin and Chang should be released immediately, Dr Mahathir said, as the use of Sosma against them was an abuse of the legal process and a violation of the law's purpose.

"The two should be released immediately and the authorities should give the guarantee that no one will be detained under Sosma merely for expressing their views, criticism and taking actions as prescribed under the country's laws and constitution," the former prime minister told a packed press conference at the Perdana Leadership Foundation today.

Shafie said that Sosma was meant to deal with acts of terrorism only and that such a guarantee had been given in Parliament.

"I was part of the Cabinet that approved Sosma. It was specific to terrorism and guarantees were given in Parliament that it won't be used for political reasons," said the party vice-president who was sacked from the Cabinet on July 28.

Shafie and Muhyiddin were dropped in the Cabinet reshuffle after both had openly criticised Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak over his handling of debt-ridden state investor 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB).

Khairuddin and Chang's charges for attempting economic sabotage also relate to 1MDB, as Khairuddin had lodged reports in several countries against the firm.

Tengku Razaleigh, the serving MP for Gua Musang, added that a lot of people had asked him to make a stand to the government about the abuse of the law.

"This is not the spirit Sosma was presented to Parliament.

"We were under the understanding that this was not like the ISA (Internal Security Act). But the way it is being interpreted is not right," he said, referring to the colonial-era law on preventive detention that has since been repealed.

Dr Mahathir also reiterated his criticism of the Attorney-General's Chambers' (AGC) dismissal of Bank Negara Malaysia's findings against 1MDB, accusing the public prosecutor's office of behaving like a judge as well.

The central bank had appealed the AGC's decision not to take further action against 1MDB, despite its investigation that the state investor had made inaccurate disclosures in order to obtain permissions for overseas investments.

The abuse of due process and the law prompted the BN leaders to express public opinion, Dr Mahathir said.

"Even taxi drivers will say this government should go.

"As senior citizens involved intimately with politics, we feel something should be done," said the longest-serving prime minister who led Malaysia for 22 years.

In their prepared press statement today, Dr Mahathir and the BN leaders said that Khairuddin's lodging of reports with foreign authorities, and that of Chang who had accompanied him, were not unlawful.

They also reminded Najib of his promise when tabling the Sosma bill in the Dewan Rakyat on April 16, 2012, where the prime minister had said that the law would not take away the freedom of people to speak their views, criticise, hold different opinions and join any association.

Najib had also promised that no one would be punished for exercising their rights that were protected in the Federal Constitution and in existing laws, they said. – October 12, 2015.

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