

Sept 17, 2009, Thu - TAIPING: The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) has questioned the rationale of maintaining a law that has damaged Malaysia's international reputation merely to keep nine people in detention.

Stressing that there was no longer need for the Internal Security Act (ISA), Suhakam commissioner Datuk N. Siva Subramaniam said the country had other laws that could be used against the remaining detainees.

Of the nine, four had been placed under the ISA for allegedly forging official documents, he said.

We are of the opinion that they be charged and tried in court.

With this, they would be given the chance to defend themselves, he told reporters outside the Kamunting detention camp near here on Thursday.

Earlier this week, the Government released five ISA detainees, leaving only nine.

Siva and Suhakam vice-chairman Tan Sri Simon Sipaun had earlier spent three hours talking to detainees at the camp.

Siva said they had only managed to meet eight of the detainees.

One of them, who has been in detention for seven years and the longest under the ISA so far, refused to see us by locking himself in the toilet.

We are unsure if he is suffering from any mental ailment but we believe he may be depressed, he said, urging the Government to release the detainee based on humanitarian grounds.

The detainee, from Teluk Intan, is allegedly a member of the Islamic militant group Jemaah Islamiyah.

Sipaun said Suhakam stood by its stand that the ISA was against human rights and should be repealed.

In the meantime, the Government should amend the Act to ensure it is not misused, he said.