

**It's a big step forward, say BN leaders**  
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Political transformation has taken a big step forward, according to people in and out of the government after hearing the Malaysia Day message from Najib Abdul Razak over TV last night.

Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein regarded the abolition of the Internal Security Act (ISA) 1960, which was announced by the Prime Minister yesterday, as a journey of the country's transformation.

He said efforts to modify existing laws was necessary to keep abreast with changing times and to safeguard the people's interest and national security.

"Not just ISA. We are looking at the Emergency Ordinance as well. It is a question of doing what you have started two years ago, which is actually to go on the journey of transformation, and it was only yesterday that the prime minister indicated to the public what we have been doing and preparing since his first speech," he told reporters after the double National and Merdeka Day celebration at Dataran Merdeka in Kuala Lumpur today.

Information, Communications and Culture Minister Dr Rais Yatim said the changes announced by Najib marked a paradigm shift in the administration of law in the country.

"The announcement repudiates allegations by the opposition that the government abused the legislation (that is to be repealed)," he told reporters in Kuala Lumpur.

He said the changes would increase the confidence of the international community has in Malaysia, especially in matters of human rights.

Even so, Rais said, the nation must not let down its guard against internal and external threats.

MIC president G Palanivel said that doing away with the requirement for publishers to renew their permits annually would boost the printing industry.

Palanivel, who is Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, said the change was timely and would especially benefit the mass media.

Rural and Regional Development Minister Mohd Shafie Apdal (left) said the changes that the prime minister announced were for long-term transformation.

After 54 years of Independence, the people were ready for more advanced politics, he added.

Mohd Shafie, who is an Umno vice-president, said the measures that Najib announced gave people greater freedom to express themselves and expand their minds.

Deputy International Trade and Industry Minister Mukhriz Mahathir hoped the changes that Najib was introducing would enhance political stability.

"We often hear investors say that one reason they come here is the political stability. I hope the stability will continue after the abolition of certain legislation," he said.

He hoped that people would not abuse the greater freedom given for expression.

Deputy Education Minister Dr Wee Ka Siong (right) believed that the changes would encourage more young people to enter politics.

"The opposition will say anything to discredit the government, but what is important is the sincerity of the

PM in bringing about change. This is political transformation. Don't link it with elections," said Wee, who is MCA Youth chief.

### **Showing confidence in society's role**

Universiti Utara Malaysia's Political and International Studies lecturer Md Shukri Shuib said the decision showed Najib's confidence in the Malaysian society's role including that of the legislative members of the opposition in the overall transformation process.

"With the abolishment of the ISA, indirectly, the executive branch (of the government) has given part of its power on the question of security to the judiciary and legislative, including the people.

"And those in the legal sector, including members of the Bar Council, should be more disciplined and also neutral. There should no more vacillating and hiding behind political activities.

"The opposition too should give their commitment to the transformation process," he said when contacted by Bernama.

Md Shukri said abolishing the ISA should also not pave the way for certain quarters to carry out subversive activities, but to see this decision as a right step to strengthen the country's functional and inclusive democratic system.

Md Shukri said there should not be polemic following this, with certain quarters claiming that the measures taken by the government were politically motivated.

He hoped the opposition would offer constructive alternatives in the formulation of new, comprehensive security laws, instead of playing up political sentiments.

Makkal Sakhti Malaysia president RS Thanenthiran said Najib's latest decision proved that he was keeping his promise made when he became prime minister - to be a 'people's prime minister'.

Describing the decision as bold and daring, Thanenthiran (left) said the decision to revoke the ISA had been awaited by the people.

"This is a major and awesome transformation for the good of the people, and the people should congratulate the prime minister for his courage and openness.

"I believe the decision was made after careful study by all concerned parties. The time is right for transformation in this era of modernisation. This outdated Act (ISA) should be abolished," he said.

Thanenthiran said the decision would not only improve Barisan Nasional's image, but also Malaysia's as there were still developed countries practising the ISA.

National Press Club president Mokhtar Hussain welcomed the government's decision to review the Publications and Printing Presses Act, hoping this would bring positive changes.

"Any positive changes to the Act will give more space to the press in Malaysia to play a more constructive role without any fear.

"It will also lift the standard of journalism in the country and enhance the integrity of the press in playing its role in a democratic society," he said.

- Bernama

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