

Najib: Freedom for 125 'restricted residents'
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By S Pathmawathy

The 125 people subjected to the Restricted Residence Act (RRA) will have the orders against them withdrawn with immediate effect, the prime minister said today.

Najib Abdul Razak announced this in the Dewan Rakyat, after the second reading of the motion to abolish the Act.

He also said more than 200 outstanding warrants of arrest that were issued under Act would be cancelled immediately.

"The government has decided to abolish the 1933 Act because the law is outdated and no longer relevant to the current situation," Najib said in his 20-minute speech.

The repeal of the archaic law follows Najib's announcement on Sept 15 to make Malaysia 'the best democracy' in the world.

Once the motion to abolish the RRA is passed, Najib will table the motion to repeal the Banishment Act 1959 for its second reading, which is expected later today.

"One thing is clear, we begin this journey not because of any pressure... the test (is) whether we deliver on the promise or not.

"Other parties can recklessly or unashamedly admit that this is their idea or opinion. They are not government mandated by the majority of the people to honour what was promised," Najib said.

He said the progresses in information and communication technology reduced the effectiveness of physical boundaries, and reduced the effectiveness of the RRA.

In the era of mobile broadband, smart phone, e-mail, Skype, fax and wireless Internet, he said, the restricted residence orders were ineffective, even though there was physical separation.

"In fact, virtual or virtual relationships become real alternatives to individuals who are barred to connect physically," he told the House.

Besides the RRA and the Banishment Act, Najib has also promised to allow more space for civil liberties, including the repeal of the Internal Security Act (ISA) and amendments to Section 27 of the Police Act and the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984.

Release orders signed today

Speaking to reporters at the Parliament lobby, Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein confirmed that the 125 individuals placed under the RRA will be served with release orders by the respective district police chiefs tomorrow.

Hishammuddin (left) said the release orders were signed today following the tabling of the repeal, which is being debated.

"The groundwork was done much earlier... this was not something we plucked from the air. We had to find out where they (the detainees) are and where they are going to...we have to make sure the community feels safe, and the process goes through responsibly," he said.

He reiterated that law is no longer relevant in a "borderless world" and assured that the ministry and the police would ensure the safety of the people.

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