

**PM tables motion to lift emergency proclamations**  
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**by Hazlan Zakaria**

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak tabled a motion in the Dewan Rakyat today to lift three emergency proclamations that have been in effect for more than 40 years since they were enacted.

The emergency laws to be lifted are:

- \* The 1966 state emergency proclamation to "quell political discord" in the Sarawak;
- \* The 1969 national emergency proclaimed after the racial riots of May 13; and,
- \* The 1977 state emergency proclamation issued to "quell political discord" in the Kelantan.

Once, and if, the motion is passed, it will end the longstanding shadow of the state of emergency laws under which Malaysians are still living.

The motion will also take away the power of the government to arbitrarily enact legislation bypassing Parliament, as prescribed under Section 150 of the federal constitution.

However, the Emergency Ordinance and other regulations already enacted by the government under Section 150, will only cease to be effective six months after these are lifted.

When tabling the motion, Najib warned the Dewan Rakyat that the government "shall have need to enact necessary steps to avoid difficulties in curbing crime or handling threats to national security, economic health or public order, including terrorism, when powers accorded by the laws enacted under Section 150 cease to be in force".

Speaker Pandikar Amin Mulia announced at the conclusion of last night's Dewan Rakyat proceedings that the motion will be tabled after Question Time this morning. This followed the passing of the 2012 Supply Bill (Budget 2012) late last night.

The fact that the emergencies are still in effect has allowed police to utilise emergency powers specified in the Emergency Ordinance, which accorded them vast powers of arrest and detention without trial.

The lifting of the emergency declarations as well as the review of all regulations, ordinances and institutions enacted during the emergencies, such as the Emergency Ordinance and Rela (People's Volunteer Corps), were part of the promises made by the PM in his Malaysia Day address to the nation two months ago.

In the Sept 15 address, Najib also announced a review of section 27 of the Police Act restricting the freedom of assembly and the abolition of the Internal Security Act (ISA), the Restricted Residence Act (RRA) and the Banishment Act.

Public Assembly Bill debate today

The RRA and the Banishment Act were repealed last month, while the Police Act was amended on Wednesday along with the tabling of the Peaceful Assembly Bill 2011 amid strident protest from the opposition that the new law would be worse than before.

The bill is to be debated today in Parliament, but the opposition has demanded its withdrawal.

Meanwhile, the repeal of the ISA is expected in March next year, pending the drafting of two new laws to replace the preventative detention law.

Announced by Najib as part of an initiative to make Malaysia "the world's best democracy", it was seen as a strategy to rebrand the BN leader as a reformer, though critics have argued that the measures have fallen far off the mark, and dismissed the effort as a public relation exercise.

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