

Harmony Act shows PM is insincere, says Anwar

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By Nigel Aw

Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim said if Prime Minister Najib Razak was sincere about doing away with draconian laws, the premier should not replace the Sedition Act 1948 with a similar law.

"The fundamental issue is whether you support draconian laws. If you say no, then it is not a question of introducing a new act to replace it or to make amendments," he said when approached by journalists at the Kuala Lumpur Court Complex at Jalan Duta yesterday afternoon.

Last week, the premier had announced that the colonial-era Sedition Act would be repealed and replaced with a National Harmony Act which would allow more room for criticism against the government.

However, Anwar claimed that with the replacement law, the ruling coalition's dominant party Umno would still abuse it.

"Certainly it will be used selectively. If it is for Umno and its outsourced groups touching on (racial or religious) sensitivities, they will be left alone but for others, action will be taken.

"It will be just like the Peaceful Assembly Act - it may be a different name, but the impact is the same," he said.

Merdeka celebrations abused by BN

Anwar also slammed the adoption of BN's 'Janji Ditepati' slogan as the theme for Merdeka Day, accusing the coalition of abusing the celebrations for political purposes.

Meanwhile, PKR vice-president N Surendran, who was also present at the court, said Najib had a track record of replacing repressive laws with similar laws.

Surendran was referring to the Peaceful Assembly Act 2012 and the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012, which replaced Section 27 of the Police Act and the International Security Act 1964 respectively.

"With the National Harmony Act, you can expect more of the same... Going with the little details, it looks almost similar to the old Sedition Act will still give the government power to criminalise people for free speech," he said.