

Zahid nay to ending Sedition Act, says law still needed

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By Zulaikha Zulkifli

Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi today said he was against abolishing the Sedition Act, concerned that such a move would mean there would be no law to regulate seditious content.

“Previously, due to demands the Internal Security Act (ISA) was abolished, due to demands the Emergency Ordinance (EO) was abolished.

“I think the Sedition Act need not be abolished. Otherwise, what is there left?

perak eo sit in protest 100811 03“If we abolish, all these (sedition) would be legitimised. Be it slander, accusations, condemnation, they would be encouraged. I think this is not what democracy requires,” he told a press conference at the Utusan Malaysia headquarters in Kuala Lumpur this morning.

Zahid drew parallels with the alleged rise in the crime rate following the abolition of the EO.

“I think whatever the demand, I feel the police should have the power to enforce the laws including after the abolishment of the EO.

“Look at the situation in society now, the crime rate is rising,” he said.

New law to replace EO

As such, Zahid said the government was now working on a new law to replace the EO repealed last year.

He added that the government would be open about the new law and will hold dialogues with various NGOs for feedback before its tabled.

The abolition of the EO has been blamed for the recent series of violent crimes as quite a number of hardened criminals had been released when the law was repealed.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak had on the eve of Malaysia Day in 2011 announced the abolition of both laws which allow detention without trial.

They were eventually repealed one in early 2012, and the other on July 11 that year,

Najib sprung another surprise, announcing that the Sedition Act would be replaced by a National Harmony Act.

Since then, the government had used the Sedition Act against several opponents including PKR vice-president Tian Chua, PAS' Tamrin Ghafar, social activist Harris Ibrahim and student activist Adam Adli Mohd Halim.

However, Najib in an interview with BBC World News on Tuesday defended the use of the law, stating that it was only enforced on those undermining the country stability.

Nonetheless, he reiterated his pledge made almost a year ago to change the Sedition Act.

"We will amend the Sedition Act but, at the same time, there will certain provisions that will ensure Malaysia will continue to be a country that's peaceful and harmonious," he was quoted as saying.

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