

## **Suhakam wants Najib to clarify status of Sedition Act**

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**By Jarni Blakkarly**

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has to clarify the conflicting statements made by ministers on the Sedition Act 1948, says Malaysian Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) vice-chairperson Khaw Lake Tee.

"We have always welcomed the promise to abolish the Sedition Act and replace it with a National Harmony act," Khaw said in reply to a reporter during the question-and-answer session after the release of Suhakam's annual report yesterday.

"I'm not sure exactly what the actual position (of the Act) now is, in view of the conflicting statements from the various ministers.

"So, we will wait to see what exactly is the position, especially when the prime minister returns," Khaw (right) said, stressing that Najib should clear the air.

Suhakam's 2012 annual report also calls for transparency in the drafting of the proposed National Harmony Act, to ensure it is in line with human rights principles.

"(Suhakam) suggests that the Act be drafted in a transparent manner, in consultation with all stakeholders, including the commission, to ensure compliance with human rights principles," the report says.

In July last year Najib announced that the Sedition Act would be replaced with a National Harmony Act.

When questioned in an interview with the British broadcast network BBC last Tuesday on why the Sedition Act was yet to be abolished, Najib gave his assurance that "it's coming".

However the matter took an unexpected twist last Saturday when Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi openly expressed his objection to the repeal of the law, saying there would be no law to regulate seditious content if the Sedition Act was abolished.

On Monday, Health Minister Dr S Subramaniam said the pledge to repeal the Act was merely a "suggestion" by Najib, and that it was subject to the final decision of the cabinet.

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