

Deputy minister: EO substitute will guarantee rights

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By Nigel Aw

The law mooted to replace the Emergency Ordinance (EO) that was repealed last year will guarantee the fundamental freedom of the people, says Deputy Home Minister Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar.

"If there is any law at all to be created, certainly it must safeguard rights, such as the right to access the judiciary and allowing people to appeal.

"There must be components of safeguards," Wan Junaidi told journalists at the Parliament lobby this morning.

Wan Junaidi drew parallels to the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012, which replaced the British-era Internal Security Act 1960, which allowed indefinite detention without trial.

"When we repealed the ISA and put in another law, we put all the components that are universal in value (of justice)," he said.

'New law needed for big fishes'

Wan Junaidi said there was a vacuum since the EO was repealed and several quarters had asked for a replacement to help police in combatting crime.

"Take gambling operators for example. All the people behind this, they will not disclose who their boss is (when they are arrested).

"The police know who is responsible, but without sufficient evidence how are we going to prosecute them (the bosses)?"

"In the end the bosses will go scot free and only small fries are caught. Then the people will say the police are protecting them, but the fact is the law is not protecting the people," he said.

Wan Junaidi said the draft of the new law was in the works and all stakeholders would be properly consulted.

Meanwhile, Federal Territories Minister Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor also threw his weight behind calls for a replacement for the EO.

"We need it, actually. We need another plan to replace the EO because after we took the EO away, the Internal Security Act (ISA) away, we have been worried about what is happening around, so the government has got to put something back again," Tengku Adnan said outside the Parliament lobby this morning.

He said the law was aimed at deterring criminal activities, rather than punishing.

'Many arrested were ex-detainees'

Asked if this was a reversal of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's democratic reforms, Tengku Adnan replied: "Of course people want freedom. We have given them freedom, but sometimes freedom also makes life hard for the people."

On whether he supported detention without trial in the new law, Tengku Adnan said it was up to the Attorney-General's Chambers to decide.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi told Parliament that several of the recent arrests of criminals showed that they were former EO detainees.

"This is not a perception, this is reality. Do not wait until these criminals, who are colour blind, go to Shah Alam's (Abdul Khalid Samad's) or Gombak's (Azmin Ali's) houses.

"I ask all of you to support this new law," Zahid said.

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