

Back tougher security laws, Najib tells MPs

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PARLIAMENT Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today sought Parliament's blessing to push for tougher security laws after the tabling of a White Paper detailing the threat by international jihadist coalition Islamic State (IS).

The prime minister moved a motion seeking the endorsement on the House for the White Paper as well as "all policies and efforts" by the government to combat IS.

The White Paper, titled 'Towards overcoming Islamic State threat', calls for the creation of a new law in handling foreign fighters.

The law is mooted, Najib said, is to deal with Malaysians fighting for militant groups overseas as well as how to handle them when they return home.

"Looking at the potential threat that this group is now posing, we are concerned and cannot deny that the return of Malaysians (fighters) from Syria and Iraq can heighten the security risk to this country.

"With their military expertise and skills to build bombs learned from Syria, they can potentially launch attacks at any time and cause loss of lives and serious damage to public property," Najib said.

As such, the prime minister added, the new law would be necessary in keeping up with several other nations which have taken similar measures and set the next Parliament sitting as target,

"In facing this threat, the time has come for the government to take the necessary steps to curb the influence of IS.

"This is in line with the action taken by several other countries which have introduced and updated their anti-terrorism laws as the primary way to overcome the terrorist threat," he said.

'Let us strengthen existing security laws'

He also called for the strengthening of existing security laws, such as the Securities Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (Sosma), Prevention of Crime Act (1959) (PCA) and Penal Code should also be strengthened.

Meanwhile, Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim when debating the motion said he supported the counter terrorism measures by the government.

However, Anwar (left) expressed worry that there may be a repeat of the Internal Security Act where the law is subsequently abused and used on politicians.

"My concern is, in the 1960s, PAS MPs supported ISA after the assurance that it will only be used on communist militants... but the ISA was used on members of the public who become victims, including an Umno minister," he said.

Anwar warned the government against abusing the new law at the expense of democracy.

"It has happened where laws were supported for nation building and security but were later used on those who do not deserve it," he said.

The White Paper said IS fighters returning to Malaysia would threaten to revive militancy in the country and could potentially launch attacks on local interests.

It added that the rise of the IS was also hurting the security in the East Coast of Sabah, which is already under threat by the Abu Sayyaf Group which has pledged allegiance to IS.

The White Paper also details the top leadership of IS and also lists Malaysians who have been killed while fighting for the terrorist group, namely Mohd Lofti Ariffin, Mohammad Fadlan Shahidi Mohd Khir, Zainah Harith, Muhammad Afiq Heusen Rahizat and Ahmad Tarmimi Maliki.

To date, it says, 39 individuals have been identified as having gone to Iraq or Syria to fight for IS while 40 others are potential suspects in joining the terrorist group.

The government had touted the White Paper as necessary to create awareness among Malaysians, who it says appear to be easily influenced by IS to take up its cause by misrepresenting Islam.