

PM defends Sedition Act, 'mutual respect' lacking

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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today said democracy was "thriving" in Malaysia and argued the Sedition Act 1948 had to be retained due to the lack of "mutual respect" among the races.

"How can we maintain the country's safety and harmony if polarisation between races is increasing?" he said in his monthly meeting with officials from the Prime Minister's Department.

He explained that the government could not loosen the existing laws as there were still irresponsible quarters who do not practice democracy and mutual respect which had led to the increasing racial tension.

"That is why the government decided to retain and strengthen the Sedition Act," he said.

Najib received strong criticism for making a U-turn during last month's Umno AGM on his pre-election promise in 2012 to abolish the colonial-era Act, the PM himself having commented at the time that the law was archaic.

Najib had said that the Act would be strengthened to protect Islam and other faiths as well as to deal with urgings for the secession of Sabah and Sarawak.

Meanwhile, citing the United States, who he said had failed to tackle racism, Najib hoped such instances would not occur in Malaysia.

He also refuted claims that the Sedition Act was retained to block democracy or to control the opposition.

"As we can see, the opposition is still free to do anything in order to strengthen their position.

"That means democracy is still 'fresh' in the country.

'Possibility of another Malaysian suicide bomber'

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister also touched on the threats in the form of Islamic State (IS) militants, where a white paper on amending security laws to combat such threats was even presented by Najib in parliament.

Apart from Ahmad Tarmimi Malik, the country's first suicide bomber who had killed at least 25 people, Najib said there was a high possibility of another Malaysian suicide

bomber.

“I didn’t mention him in parliament because he had used a nickname but there is high possibility that he was Malaysian.

“His actions had worse effects as 50 people had died because of him.”

As for the security threats in Sabah, Najib said it was important for the state to be protected as it is part of Malaysia.

“Although things have been quiet in the last few days, that doesn’t mean the threat is not there.

“All these things I have mentioned (protecting country against threats) should be our focus next year,” he told civil servants in the last meeting for the year today.

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