

Gov't might misuse Pota, fears opposition

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By Kamles Kumar

Opposition leaders have flayed the new Prevention of Terrorism Bill 2015 (Pota) saying it might be misused by the government to curb political rivals.

"Section 13 (1) (b) allows the special enquiry officer to detain a suspect for two years. According to Section 17 (5), these two years can be renewed indefinitely and Section 19 allows no judicial review or habeas corpus.

"There are severe restrictions of civil liberties under Pota. We see this as a threat to the very fragile fundamental liberties that we have in this country," PKR's Kelana Jaya MP Wong Chen told reporters today.

He disputed that since the definition of "terrorist activities" is underlined in a different act, it allows room for political figures to be wrongly prosecuted.

"They say if you belong to a political party, registered under the Registrar of Societies (ROS), then you are safe. But is it really true? I don't think so. The definition of 'terrorist' is defined by the Anti-Money Laundering Act, a separate act. So we are seeing a definition across the laws. It is clearly not simple legislation," Wong Chen said.

He also criticised Putrajaya's short notice on the bill's implementation, which gave very little time to the opposition MPs to analyse and debate it.

"We only had a week to prepare. It is completely unfair and not appropriate for such an important bill. This legislation could be biggest for this year," asserted Wong Chen.

Meanwhile, PAS' Kuala Terengganu MP Raja Kamarul Bahrin Shah Raja Ahmad (right) believed that Pota is similar to the Internal Security Act (ISA) which was abolished in 2012.

"It was mentioned (in the bill) that there's no warrant required for arrest so this is an infringement of liberty. The only difference between the Internal Security Act (ISA) and Pota, is that detention under the ISA is indefinite, while for Pota it is renewable in two-year blocks.

"It is just a formality to renew, so we see this as the ISA in disguise," he told reporters at the press conference.

Putrajaya today tabled two new bills and amended five other existing laws via the Home Ministry today.

Two of the bills, the Prevention of Terrorism Bill 2015 (Pota) and the Special Measures Against Terrorism in Foreign Countries Bill 2015 were introduced by the government to

combat the growing threat of terrorists like the Islamic State (IS).

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