

Pota is consistent with democracy, argues Najib

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Although the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2015 (Pota) is heavily criticised for its provisions allowing preventive detention, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak argued that it is consistent with democracy.

He said it is no good to act only after blood has been spilled on the streets and fear spreads amongst the people, and hence acts of terrorism must be prevented before it can take place.

“I believe that the principle of preventive detention is absolutely necessary for us to ensure that no act of terrorism would take place in Malaysia and on our soil [...]

“The notion of preventive detention is consonant with democracy, because democracy respects the rule of law, and respects life as a fundamental principle in human rights. Anyone who destroys life does not respect human rights.

“No one should doubt that we need it, and we will not hesitate to stand firm against those who would bring bombs and death to our streets,” he said at a dinner hosted by the United Nations Association Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur today.

Incidentally, today is also the 28th anniversary of the *Operasi Lalang* crackdown, which saw extensive use of the now-abolished Internal Security Act 1960 to detain dissidents.

Pota was passed at the Dewan Rakyat in the wee hours of April 7, after a marathon **14-hour debate**.

Opposition parliamentarians, who were concerned that Pota allows for detentions without trial, had attempted to stall the passage of the law by attempting to force a bloc vote or make amendments to the Pota bill at every opportunity.

22 suspects detained under Pota

Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi had argued at the time that although there is no judicial oversight on detentions made under Pota, it is still **scrutinised** by a panel.

According to Zahid (*photo*) last week, 22 suspects have been detained under Pota thus far, out of 132 arrests made against people suspected to have links to the militant group Islamic State (IS).

Meanwhile, Najib told the audience at the dinner function today that of the four pillars of the UN's global counter-terrorism strategy, the first one is especially critical.

Namely, this is to take measures to address conditions that are conducive to the spread of terrorism, such as prolonged unresolved dispute, the lack of rule of law, socio-economic marginalisation, and absence of good governance.

“Preventive measures, vigilance, public awareness and de-radicalisation campaigns, together with effective rehabilitation programs, are all necessary to combat the threat of violent extremism and terrorism,” he said.

He added that a strong counter-narrative is needed to combat the ideologies of terrorist groups, and convince the youth that violence is not the solution to injustice and suffering.

“Instead, democracy with good governance, social justice, and an inclusive approach to economic and social development is the best way forward,” he said.

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