

'Razak wanted to rule through democracy, not emergency'

MalaysiaKini.com

Jan 14th, 2016

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The country's second Prime Minister Abdul Razak Hussein could have ruled with great powers through the emergency National Operations Council (Mageran).

But Razak wanted to return power to Parliament, former Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

"Razak decided that he wanted to do away with Mageran... He believed there should be Parliament, not Mageran.

"When Razak said that everybody (in the council) was numb, we didn't know what to do," Abdullah said.

Abdullah, fondly known as Pak Lah, was speaking at an event commemorating 40 years since Razak's passing.

Mageran was formed in the aftermath of the May 13, 1969 riots, and until 1971 ruled Malaysia in lieu of an elected government.

Fast forward 45 years, and concerns have been raised that Razak's son, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, now wants emergency powers through the National Security Council Bill.

Under the new law, Najib, as NSC chairperson, would be able to declare any location a "security zone" in which authorities have wide-ranging arbitrary powers, including to arrest as well as seize, and destroy property.

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Source: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/326735>