

Najib: NSC Act 'misinterpreted' by fearmongers
MalaysiaKini.com
July 27th, 2016

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has accused politically-motivated fearmongers of deliberately misinterpreting newly-introduced security laws, especially the National Security Council (NSC) Act 2016 which will soon come into force.

"We were criticised for passing these laws, including by some who fearmongered for political reasons. The National Security Council Act in particular has been deliberately misinterpreted," said the PM in a statement.

He argued that unlike accusations by critics, the new law is not the same as a declaration of a national emergency, a power which he assured all still remains with the Agong, and unlike a national emergency, Parliament remains sitting, with oversight on any security area declared.

He reiterated his earlier stand that the government will never apologise for enacting the laws which he said placed the safety and security of the Malaysian people first.

"These laws were necessary, and other countries have since followed our lead," he said, assuring Malaysians that the government will continue to put all possible measures in place to protect them.

Naib continued that terrorist outrages around the world demonstrate that the threat is real and growing, and Malaysia, too, got a taste of its first Islamic State (IS) attack last month.

This was why, following requests from the security forces, Naib said that the government introduced the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act, the Special Measures against Terrorism in Foreign Countries Act, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and the National Security Council Act.

"Islamic State and its cruel, perverted ideology have no place in Islam, nor in our peaceful, diverse and tolerant country. Now is the time for us to unite and play an even greater part alongside the world community in the fight against terrorism," the premier cautioned.

The National Security Council Act, which comes into effect on Aug 1, 2016, was passed by the Malaysian Parliament in December 2015. It was gazetted without royal assent, as the government shrugged off a request by the Conference of Rulers for it to be refined.

The government claims that its purpose is to strengthen the coordination of intelligence, establish a swift response mechanism, and if it is in the interests of national security, to enable the establishment of a security area for six months, citing cases like the 2014 Lahad Datu armed intrusion.

However, critics worry that the loose wording and vague provisions in the Act may lead to abuse and caution that it may place too much power in the PM's hands and bypass royal oversight.

The National Security Council consists of eight members, at least five of whom must be present to constitute a quorum at any meeting of the council. In existence since 1971, The NSC Act places it on a statutory basis for the first time and formalises its powers.

The government claims that the Act contains provisions for the protection of civilians and their property as and when they are covered by the establishment of a security area, and also set limits on the actions of the security forces during that time.

This is something which critics argue is not the case, as provisions in the Act that govern those areas are loose and vague.