

Gerakan seeks parliament committee on ISA
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Gerakan today urged the government to set up a parliamentary select committee to look into the review of the Internal Security Act, a proposal which was mooted by the government yesterday.
MCPX

Hoping that the ISA review would eventually lead to some significant changes in the colonial-era security law, Gerakan's acting president Dr Koh Tsu Koon said that the parliamentary committee can play a role in identifying the changes.

gerakan youth agm 2007 051007 koh tsu koon 2 "This select committee consisting of members of Parliament from both the government and opposition benches can examine in depth various aspects of the Act and achieve some common ground before tabling for open debate in Parliament," he said in a statement today.

He added that the proposed review of ISA should make it to be in compliance with basic principles of human rights.

"There should be enough safeguard against various possible and actual infringements on basic human rights.

"The review should also provide more specific definitions and listing of offences which relate to genuine threat to national security, including terrorism," he added.

The former Penang chief minister said that with clear criteria and enough safeguards, the ISA "will less likely be subject to abuse and the perception that it has been used for political purposes to silence dissenters".

PM was quite receptive

Yesterday the de facto law minister Mohd Zaid Ibrahim told Parliament that the government would review the law which allows for indefinite detention without trial.

He said that the review - to be undertaken by a study involving Zaid, Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar and Attorney-General Abdul Gani Patail - will "enhance and update provisions" in it.

isa handcuffs "However, as a government that is sensitive towards the public's demand, it is open to enhancing and updating provisions under the ISA as well as other laws," he told Parliament.

"Preventive detention is actually still needed in this country. However, there is the possibility of reviewing the Act in future," Zaid said, without giving a timeframe of when the review will take place.

Responding today, Koh said that Gerakan was one of several parties which have been calling for review or even repeal of the ISA since the 80s.

He also revealed that he has been pursuing Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi since April on the need for ISA review.

"The prime minister was quite receptive," he said.

Release all ISA detainees

Koh also pointed to another parliamentary select committee which was formed in the 80s to look into changes to be made to the Dangerous Drugs Act which also provided preventive detention without trial, just like the ISA.

He said that committee, of which he was a member, was able to come up with some specific provisions to provide for safeguard and the bill was passed in Parliament.

"That committee which comprised opposition members such as Lee Lam Thye was given a very good insight into the various aspects relating to drug trafficking and preventive detention, including difficulties with respect to evidences and witnesses," he said.

Koh also revealed that in January and February, and again in early April and May this year, he had appealed to Abdullah for the review and release of existing ISA detainees on health, humanitarian and other valid grounds, including the Hindraf 5.

Last week, the Federal Court refused to release five ethnic Indian activists - dubbed the Hindraf 5 - who were fighting for their freedom after being detained under the Act.

The five, including a newly sworn-in state lawmaker, were detained in December after enraging the government a month earlier by mounting a mass rally alleging discrimination against minority ethnic Indians.

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