

Pak Lah, repeal the ISA
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Param Cumaraswamy

Prime Minister, at your press conference yesterday you were reported to have said, among other things, that Anwar Ibrahim "has become a threat to the economy and possibly security" meaning national security.

When asked by journalists what action the government would take against Anwar, you were reported to have said "I will not indicate what plan I will take, what I do will be in the best interests of the people and the country".

These remarks have caused considerable speculation that the repressive draconian Internal Security Act 1960 may be invoked to arrest and detain Anwar particularly in the current environment where there is a prevailing climate of fear after the arrest and detention of a prominent blogger, member of parliament and a young journalist, though the journalist has since been released.

With respect, let me remind you that detention under the ISA is meant to deter a substantial body of persons to cause fear by engaging in organised violence to procure the alteration of the government lawfully established. This is clearly expressed in the preamble to the ISA.

In this regard, the assurance given by Tun Abdul Razak, the then deputy prime minister and minister of defence, to the Dewan Rakyat when he moved the second reading of the Internal Security Bill on June 21, 1960 on the two aims of this legislation must be borne in mind. He said, among other things:

"The honourable prime minister and other members of the government, including myself, have made it quite clear on a number of occasions that, because the emergency is to be declared at an end, the government does not intend to relax its vigilance against the evil enemy who still remains as a threat on our border and who is now attempting by subversion to succeed where he has failed by force of arms. It is for this reason that this bill is before the House. It has two main aims; firstly to counter subversion throughout the country and, secondly, to enable the necessary measures to be taken on the border area to counter terrorism".

Tun Razak further assured, "The government has no desire whatsoever to hinder healthy democratic opposition in any way. This is a democratic country and the government intends to maintain it as such. It is the enemies of democracy who will be detained", adding, "Nor will these powers be abused".

In the absence of any evidence of any organised violence to remove your government, any measure taken to detain Anwar or any more members of the opposition parties under this draconian legislation, particularly in the current environment, will be seen as your government not only abusing the power of detention under the ISA but also using the ISA meant in essence for the protection of the security of the state being used for the protection of the security of the political party currently in government. Such perceptions will not go down well with right thinking Malaysians and the international community.

Please do not resort to this legislation to detain Anwar or anyone else. As part of your

programme for reform, please repeal this repressive and draconian legislation which has long outlived its purpose and aims.

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