

We will amend ISA: Hishammuddin
Malaysiakini.com
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Jun 25, 2009

The Home Ministry today vowed to keep to its word and review the Internal Security Act (ISA), which has earned the scorn of civil societies both local and abroad.

Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein said four aspects pertaining to the legislation, which provides for detention without trial are, being looked at.

The pledge to reform the draconian Act which allows for indefinite detention without trial was made by Najib Abdul Razak (right) after taking over as Prime Minister in April.

Hishammuddin added that he hopes to table the amendments at the next parliament session.

"But it depends very much on us engaging the public and the NGOs... because if we do it too soon and table it in parliament, they (the opposition MPs) will say we have not engaged the public," said Hishammuddin.

He said the government is looking into reviewing the definition of the Act and what is considered national threat.

He is also considering shortening the 60-day detention period to 28 days as implemented by the British government and also limiting the number of extension orders, which currently allows detainees to be held for two years at the minister's discretion.

He added that the ministry is also looking into appointing independent investigators to take part in the process.

Hounded by the opposition

The minister was hounded by the opposition when responding to a question by BN's Setiu parliamentarian Mohd Jidin Shafee on the number of people currently detained under the Act and their crimes.

They kept demanding an answer from the minister on the relevancy of the Act and questioned the government's commitment to making the reforms.

"The time is right to study the Act but the opposition is diverting people's attention only to the ISA, but the BN government is looking into everything," said Hishammuddin (left).

He said that the ministry is also looking into the significance of 33 laws under the purview of the Home Affairs Ministry.

"Acts not relevant to current times need to be amended and efforts to change the laws will involve all stakeholders.

"I have formed a committee involving all the agencies in the ministry and we will also engage all the NGOs," said Hishammuddin.

Hishammuddin ticked off the opposition for not wanting to listen to his views and explanations.

Ministry also amending 33 laws

Among the 33 laws under the purview of the Home Minister are the Restricted Residence Act 1933, Explosive Act 1957, Corrosive And Explosive Substances And Offensive Weapons Act 1958, Second-Hand Dealers Act 1946 and Criminal Justice Act 1953.

Hishammuddin said that interested parties, including the opposition are welcome to submit proposals.

He revealed that since 2004, 100 individuals had been detained under the Act but only 12 are still being held, half of whom are foreigners.

Ipoh Timur parliamentarian Lim Kit Siang said (right) there has been nothing concrete on the ISA review, although it has now been two and a half months since Najib Razak made the promise.

He called for a more inclusive review process that will incorporate the opposition, NGOs and views of ordinary Malaysians instead of a BN-Umno review of the law.

He added that Hishammuddin has been infected by the "government knows best decease" and urged him adopt a positive attitude during the review process.

Hishammuddin said that the review process is on-going and the findings will be revealed soon in parliament.

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