

ISA poll: Charges of rigging after sudden surge of voters
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The Home Ministry's online poll on the Internal Security Act (ISA) initially saw an overwhelming number of respondents denouncing the legislation as draconian and calling for its repeal.

There has however been a drastic shift in the figures since then.

Suddenly, there is an overwhelming number of respondents who support the government's move to review the law.

The sharp spike - of about 17,000 in two days - has led some to wonder if the poll had been tampered with. An overwhelming number of the recent participants voted in favour of ISA.

Suspicious were raised when almost all of the new voters only answered two of the four questions - one on whether it is a preventative or draconian law, and the other on whether the law should be amended or abolished.

These two crucial questions drew twice the number of voters than three other questions.

The Home Ministry corporate communications chief Jamilah Taib, in a statement issued this afternoon, denied that the website's editorial staff had rigged the poll.

"What is seen (the surge) is real. It is not our policy to lie to those who visit our site," she said, adding that detractors should not hurl accusations just because the outcome is not in their favour.

"You still have until midnight today to vote. Starting tomorrow, five new questions will be published," she said.

A day after the poll had commenced on Aug 5, more than 1,000 people had called for the security law to be scrapped.

There was also a campaign on the popular networking site Facebook calling on members to vote against retaining ISA, which provides for detention without trial.

However, a check today revealed that more than 30,000 people have participated in the poll.

As of 1.45pm, 16,077 (51 percent) wanted the Act repealed while 15,590 (49 percent) wanted the government to continue with the review.

Preventive law vs draconian

On the question concerning how respondents' perceive the law, which critics say tramples on human rights, the number of those who saw it as a 'preventive' measure had slightly edged those who considered it 'draconian'.

As of 1.45pm, 14,807 (50 percent) saw it as a 'preventive law' while 14,628 (49 percent) viewed it as oppressive and outdated.

On Aug 6, Malaysiakini reported that nearly 1,000 respondents clicked on 'draconian' while only 85 saw it as a 'preventive law'.

The poll came in the wake of a recent massive street protest against the law.

Led by opposition leaders, some 30,000 people jammed the traffic arteries of Kuala Lumpur, leading to the police firing tear gas and water cannons to disperse the crowd.

Nearly 600 people were detained. Of this figure, 29 have been charged with illegal assembly and violating the Societies Act.

Crafted to deal with the communist insurgency in the 1960s, the ISA earned notoriety when it was used against political dissents.

The most notable crackdown being 'Ops Lalang' in 1987 which saw more than 100 people being detained during the tenure of former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

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