

'Big Step Forward' Lauded
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KUALA LUMPUR -- Political transformation has taken a big step forward, according to people in and out of the government after hearing the Malaysia Day message from Najib Tun Razak over TV last night.

Minister of Rural and Regional Development Mohd Shafie Apdal said the changes that the Prime Minister announced were for long-term transformation.

After 54 years of Independence, the people were ready for more advanced politics, he added.

Mohd Shafie, who is Umno vice-president, said the measures that Najib announced gave people greater freedom to express themselves and expand their minds.

Deputy Minister of International Trade and Industry Mukhriz Mahathir hoped the changes that Najib was introducing would enhance political stability.

"We often hear investors say that one reason they come here is the political stability. I hope the stability will continue after the abolition of certain legislation," he said.

He hoped that people would not abuse the greater freedom given for expression.

Deputy Education Minister Dr Wee Ka Siong believed that the changes would encourage more young people to enter politics.

"The opposition will say anything to discredit the government, but what is important is the sincerity of the PM in bringing about change. This is political transformation. Don't link it with elections," said Dr Wee, who is MCA Youth chief.

Meanwhile, Minister of Information, Communications and Culture Dr Rais Yatim said the changes announced by Najib Tun Razak last night marked a paradigm shift in the administration of law in the country.

"The announcement repudiates allegations by the opposition that the government abused the legislation (that is to be repealed)," he told reporters here.

He said the changes would increase the confidence of the international community has in Malaysia, especially in matters of human rights.

Even so, Rais said, the nation must not let down its guard against internal and external threats.

MIC president G. Palanivel said that doing away with the requirement for publishers to renew their permits annually would boost the printing industry.

Palanivel, who is Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, said the change was timely and would especially benefit the mass media

(Bernama)