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PRIME NEWS

'National Harmony Act will be effective'

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PROTECTING SOCIETY: It will be guided by three key principles which deal with provisions under Constitution, says Najib

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THE government's power in dealing with any actions threatening national unity and harmony will not be affected by the decision to abolish the Sedition Act and replacing it with the National Harmony Act.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the new act would be guided by three key principles to deal with actions that could incite hatred and insult any institutions and existing provisions under the Constitution.

"(Firstly,) the new act will address any action that can incite hatred and raise disloyalty towards the Yang di-Pertuan Agong or any ruler," he said after chairing the 10th Northern Corridor Implementation Authority (NCIA) council meeting and witnessing the signing and exchanging of four memorandums of agreements on developmental projects in the northern corridor worth RM1.96 billion.

Najib said, secondly, the new act would address actions to spread malicious intent and create racial tension among the different segments of the population in the country.

"Thirdly, it will deal with any attempts to question matters involving the rights, status, special priv-

ileges, sovereignty or fixed prerogative as stipulated and protected under the Federal Constitution or Articles 151, 153 and 181 of the Federal Constitution.

Referring to sex bloggers Alvin Tan Jye Yee and his Singaporean girlfriend, Vivian Lee, Najib said the young couple's rude and disrespectful act towards Islam showed that abusing the freedom of voice and opinion could harm society.

"Although the government would like to guarantee the freedom of speech, it cannot be abused to the extent that it can harm national unity."

The controversial couple had incurred the wrath of Malaysians over their Facebook posting of a picture of them eating *bak kut teh* with the caption "*Selamat berbuka puasa*" on Facebook.

The picture had a halal logo and the words "*wangi, enak, menyelerakan*" (fragrant, delicious and appetising) were used to describe the herbal pork dish.

It was reported yesterday that the couple could be charged under the Sedition Act 1948.

In June, a marketing manager of a cosmetics company, was detained for allegedly posting seditious comments against the king on her Facebook page.

Melissa Gooi, 32, was alleged to have posted a statement allegedly insulting Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah while he was giving his birthday speech, which was carried live on national television.

The king had urged Malaysians to accept the results of the recently concluded 13th General Election and advised those not satisfied with the outcome of the polls to use the proper channels to air their grievances as outlined in the Federal Constitution and the country's laws.

The woman is being investigated for uploading content containing insults against the monarchy, an offence under the Communications and Multimedia Act. She is also facing charges under the Sedition Act.

Najib yesterday also reiterated the government's firm stand against attempts to incite hatred and stir racial discord. He said the nation's main pillars of national unity and

"Although the government would like to guarantee the freedom of speech, it cannot be abused to the extent that it can harm national unity."
Datuk Seri Najib Razak

harmony could crumble if the government was not firm in dealing with actions threatening them.

"We must be firm on this. There cannot be absolute freedom at the expense of national interest and harmony. I have always stressed the principle of freedom with respon-

sibility. The government's position on this is clear and we will maintain and uphold the principle," Najib said, stressing that the people must be sensitive to differences in religions and cultures.

Najib also said the government would look into views asking for a



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new law similar to the repealed Emergency Ordinance 1969.

He said the relevant stakeholders would be involved in the discussion including the police and the Attorney-General's Chambers on this proposal.

"We can get the views of Suhakam and even from the Bar Council."

On whether the government would be seen as back-tracking should it come up with an act similar to the Emergency Ordinance, Najib said it should not be viewed as such.

"It is not back-tracking. We want to ensure that the fight against crime will be effective.

"At the same time, we must strike a balance to protect the rights of individuals and the interests of society by ensuring there is no abuse of power."

Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi had earlier this month said he was discussing with Attorney-General Tan Sri Abdul Gani Patail the draft of a new law following the repeal of the Emergency Ordinance.

Concerns were raised after it was revealed that many of the more than 2,600 detainees released from the Simpang Renggam detention centre after the Emergency Ordinance was repealed had returned to a life of crime.

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