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Govt will discuss if replacement to EO is needed, says Najib

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PUTRAJAYA: The Government will discuss the view that a new law similar to the repealed Emergency Ordinance is needed, said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

The Prime Minister, in his first reaction to the issue, said some wanted preventative detention while others were against it.

"We will discuss this with the police and the Attorney-General," he told reporters at his office here yesterday.

"What is important is that the law must have a balance between protecting individual rights and safeguarding community interests," he said.

"It must also ensure that there would be no abuse of power by any party."

Najib stressed that the Government was not backtracking on its decision to repeal the EO.

"But we want to maintain that the fight against crime will be effective

The fight against crime will be effective while ensuring freedom of individuals and no abuse of power.

- DATUK SERI NAJIB TUN RAZAK

while ensuring freedom of individuals and no abuse of power," he added.

Najib added that the views of stakeholders, such as Suhakam and maybe the Bar Council, would be taken into account.

It was reported that the Home Ministry would hold a forum to discuss the idea of introducing a new law to replace the EO on Aug 24.

Since the repeal of the EO two years ago, there have been voices of

concern over the rise in violent crime and drug-related cases.

On Tuesday, Home Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the Government would not push to reintroduce preventive detention to deal with the rise in organised crime.

He added that the ministry would stand with Attorney-General Tan Sri Abdul Gani Patail - who declared he would not support any move to reinstate preventive detention - but believed that the country still needed a law to clamp down on gangsterism and serious crime.

On the same day, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar said that some kind of preventive law was needed to strike fear in violent criminals and check organised crime.

The Prime Minister also said that the National Harmony Act, currently being drawn up to replace the Sedition Act 1948, would not affect the Government's power to handle actions that jeopardised national

unity and harmony.

He said the Government wanted to guarantee freedom of speech for all Malaysians, but this should not be abused to the extent of endangering national unity and harmony.

"The insolent and impudent act by the young couple who insulted Islam showed that freedom of expression and irresponsible opinion can jeopardise the community," he added.

Sex bloggers Alvin Tan and Vivian Lee angered many Malaysians - both Muslims and non-Muslims - by uploading a photograph showing them eating *bak kut teh* with a caption *Selamat Berbuka Puasa* on Facebook.

Both are being investigated by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission while Abdul Gani said they could also be investigated under the Sedition Act 1948.

Najib said the Government would ensure that the new Act would maintain three major principles.

The first referred to the tackling of actions that led to hatred of or insult or disloyalty to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong or any other Ruler.

The second concerns the tackling of acts that encourage malicious feelings and enmity among the various ethnic groups in the country.

"The third principle refers to matters on tackling acts that dispute any matters pertaining to special privileges, sovereignty or prerogative stipulated or protected by the provision in section three of the Federal Constitution or articles 153, 151 and 181 of the Federal Constitution," Najib said.

He added that the nation needed to determine principles that could look after the interests of the country, including the matter on racial harmony as well as the position of religion.

"This is not a matter pertaining to Islam alone, but also involved all ethnic groups and the sensitivity of all races and religions."