

Umno Youth takes credit for PM's reforms
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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 30 — Umno Youth was the catalyst behind the government's recent civil rights reforms, its chief Khairy Jamaluddin said today.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak recently announced plans to repeal of the Internal Security Act (ISA) as well as separate legal provisions barring students over 21 from becoming members of political parties.

He also tabled the controversial Public Assembly Bill, which was passed by the Dewan Rakyat yesterday. The new law, which regulates public assembly and bars street protests, has been criticised as more repressive than current laws regarding the freedom of assembly.

The Bill was pushed through solely on Barisan Nasional votes, after opposition lawmakers walked out en masse.

"Umno Youth has led the movement towards the development of civil liberties, something that is now a government policy. Think ISA, University and University Colleges Act (UUCA), Restricted Residence (Act), press freedom and, most recently, freedom of assembly," he said during his speech at his party's youth wing assembly here.

He said that he wanted to shed the perception that Umno was just a "village hero," and proposed a Bank Belia (Youth Bank) to help youths overcome debt problems.

"Umno Youth is more progressive under my leadership. For the last three years, we focus on less rhetoric, and more on specific problem-solving," Khairy told reporters later.

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