

**Controls needed for online media, says Soi Lek**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
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**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 15 – MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek lauded Putrajaya's decision tonight to relax press laws but expressed the need for online media content to be better regulated.

The senior politician (picture) told The Malaysian Insider that the alternative media currently operate like "cowboys in the Wild Wild West" as the government has shied away from imposing stricter controls on the Internet.

"We must admit it is not a level playing field between the traditional media and the new media. The new media... people like you... now enjoy freedom like cowboys in the Wild Wild West.

"There is no effective control over the Internet," he said when contacted.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak announced a slew of reforms tonight to security and press laws during his nation address for Malaysia Day, saying the move to increase civil liberties was "risky, but we are doing this for our survival."

Among others, Najib said the requirement for annual printing permits would be scrapped from the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA).

The prime minister, who was speaking during a live telecast at 8.45pm tonight, also announced changes to security laws, drawing applause when he said the contentious Internal Security Act (ISA) would be repealed.

"No individual will ever be detained simply due to political ideology," he said in his speech that was broadcast live on all local television stations.

The Barisan Nasional (BN) chief said that two new security laws would be introduced for preventive detention which would be limited only to cases of terrorism and "ensure that basic human rights are protected."

Najib said that under the new laws, detentions could only be extended by the court and therefore "the power of detention will be shifted from the executive to the judiciary, unless it concerns terrorism."

The Umno president also said that the Police Act would be amended to allow for freedom of assembly according to international norms, although street protests would still be outlawed.

Dr Chua predicted that Malaysians would be pleased with Najib's announcements tonight, adding that MCA has been advocating for the abolishment of the ISA.

"We felt that the ISA can be subjected to abuse and even if it cannot be repealed, there should be a new regulation in place at the very least to counterbalance the powers of the Home Minister," he said.

On amendments to the Police Act, Dr Chua agreed that the government should “allow the voices of the rakyat to be heard” by allowing street demonstrations in a controlled environment.

He said designated meeting spots could be granted to groups planning protests and police personnel could be deployed to ensure peace.

“The organisers must be held responsible, of course, to ensure peace and that there is no destruction of public property and lives.

“There is also no need for heavy police presence... the police should be there to ensure smooth traffic flow and safety of those involved,” he said.

The Najib administration has received heavy criticism from civil society groups and the foreign media for its handling of the Bersih 2.0 rally on July 9.

The latest survey from local pollster Merdeka Center showed that Najib’s popularity slid to 59 per cent this August from the highest of 79 per cent in May 2010, fuelled by rising concerns over the surge in living costs and his government’s handling of the July 9 Bersih 2.0 rally.

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