

ISA repeal an 'Islamic' move, says former Perlis Mufti
The Malaysian Insider
September 16, 2011
By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 16 — Influential Muslim scholar Dr Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin today described the repeal of the Internal Security Act (ISA) as an "Islamic" move, heaping praise on Datuk Seri Najib Razak for the "brave" measure.

The former Perlis Mufti said the prime minister's Malaysia Day "gift" to the nation was more valuable than money and proved that the leader's promise to transform the country was not merely political rhetoric.

"The ISA is an un-Islamic law. It infringes [upon] individual rights and can be easily misused by leaders so repealing it was a very Islamic move.

"Najib's announcement is more valuable than any bonus payment or salary increase because repealing the ISA means the restoration of human rights... which is more valuable than money," he said in a statement here.

Asri also asked Malaysians to be "grateful" to the government for the latest round of reforms, urging for maturity in their evaluation of the measures.

"We must engage in politics in a mature manner. Praise what is praiseworthy; support what should be supported; criticise what should be criticised," he said.

He pointed out that the fight to repeal the ISA was a long-drawn one and the people had scored a victory last night after Najib's announcement.

Yesterday, the prime minister introduced a slew of reforms to the country's security and press laws, as well as lifting three Emergency Declarations while promising to increase civil liberties.

Apart from repealing the ISA and amending provisions in the Police Act regarding peaceful assembly, the prime minister also announced that the government will do away with the annual printing and publishing permits requirement as provided under the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA).

"I congratulate and thank Najib for this historic step. To me, the announcement is a very meaningful one to the country," said Asri.

Opposition lawmakers have complained, however, that Najib's reforms were insufficient, pointing out that although the ISA would be repealed, the contentious law would be replaced by two new Acts.

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