

Pakatan claims credit for ISA repeal, law reforms

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By Shazwan Mustafa Kamal

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 16 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) leaders have taken credit for Datuk Seri Najib Razak's decision to repeal the Internal Security Act 1960 (ISA) as well as several law reforms, saying the prime minister's move was a direct rip-off from their Buku Jingga plans.

Opposition leaders have chosen to remain cautious over the PM's announcement, but at the same time said that the "bold reforms" vindicated PR's struggles for "the past few decades."

Pua said 'Najib lifted everything from our Buku Jingga. Every single thing.' — File pic
"We are vindicated by the announcement but are still hesitant to pop the champagne as we await the fine print.

"Oh, and Najib lifted everything from our Buku Jingga. Every single thing. Najib has just proved and vindicated our struggles over the past few decades," DAP national publicity secretary Tony Pua told The Malaysian Insider.

Najib announced last night his intention to repeal the ISA and the remaining three Emergency Declarations when both the Dewan Negara and Dewan Rakyat have their next sitting.

In his Malaysia Day address, the prime minister said new laws will be enacted to protect the peace, harmony and security of the country, adding the government will do away with annual printing and publishing permits with permits that can be cancelled if regulations are flouted.

Pua said that Najib's announcement last night proved the success of public pressure against the government, citing the recent July 9 Bersih rally as one of the catalysts for last night's announcement.

PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar echoed Pua's remarks, and pointed out that most of the law reforms announced by the PM had first been mooted by PR via its Buku Jingga reform plans.

The Buku Jingga plans include, among others, a promise to abolish the ISA once the opposition assumed federal power.

Nurul Izzah noted although Najib had decided to revoke the Emergency Declarations, the government had previously rejected the same idea when PR first mooted the Emergency Revocation Bill in Parliament last March.

"Nonetheless, it is crucial that these changes introduced are meaningful and lasting by ensuring Malaysians are not subjected by reintroduction of draconian legislation in any guise or form.

"In fact, if he can announce all these measures, Datuk Seri Najib must immediately implement comprehensive reforms to the electoral system as demanded by Bersih 2.0 and all others," she told The Malaysian Insider.

Nurul Izzah hoped the changes introduced are meaningful and lasting. Najib also said last night 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."

The PM 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."

Before a studio audience of 800 including his entire Cabinet, he also announced that the Banishment Act would be abolished while he will do away with the need for annual publishing permits under the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA).

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.

Pua however questioned the potential new laws to be put in place, and suggested that the new legislation may just be "cosmetic" improvements of the old ones.

"The fine print could mean that the new laws to be introduced as replacement for the old laws may be little but cosmetic improvements of the old. We have seen that with the amendments to UUCA (Universities and University Colleges Act) in 2009. Or the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC)," he told The Malaysian Insider.

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