

Putrajaya will look to US, UK anti-terrorism laws, says Hisham
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By Melissa Chi

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 16 — Putrajaya will look to anti-terrorism laws from the West as models to replace the Internal Security Act (ISA) which is to be repealed under a raft of reforms announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said the Patriot Act in the United States, the Anti-terrorism Act in the UK and Australia will be considered in drawing up new security laws for Malaysia.

“All these can be examples for us to foil potential terrorist acts,” he told reporters after the prime minister’s address to the nation last night.

“It is another chapter of the journey which we announced earlier and a lot of work has now got to go into the two Acts that were announced and actually the balancing between national interest and security and civil liberties is the balance that we need to achieve,” he added.

The home minister said the two new Acts proposed to replace the ISA will cover terrorism and national security. Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz said the new laws will still allow detention without trial.

Hishammuddin (picture) had denied on Tuesday speculation that the government will abolish the ISA — a possible indication of resistance among security officials and right-wing elements in Umno to purported plans by the prime minister to repeal the controversial law.

Despite talk coming from sources in Najib’s office in recent days that the PM was mulling a repeal of the law which provides for detention without trial, the home minister insisted that the law would only be “adjusted and amended.”

“So as far as KDN (Home Ministry) is concerned, we were fully aware that this transformation needed to be made but the two years that it took us to get here is finding the balance and the events that took place around the world, events that took place in Malaysia helped us in shaping what the prime minister announced today,” Hishammuddin said.

He reiterated Najib’s remarks, saying that the country was no longer in a state of emergency and all the Emergency Declarations will be looked into.

“Those are related to the emergency conditions and that was the basic premise of what the prime minister said that we are no longer in a state of emergency.

“So not only just ordinances but even institutions and agencies that fall within emergency ordinances have to be relooked at,” he said.

Hishammuddin said as far as the emergency ordinances were concerned, that has only been debated recently and the Attorney-General’s office as well as other agencies have to be consulted.

"Because what PM announced today is the general principles operationally, it's got to be taken into account later.

"Specific ordinances, once we have consulted with the Attorney-General, once we have consulted with the agencies involved, then we will come out and actually state," he said when asked if the other detention without trial laws will be repealed as well.

He stressed that the abolishment of the law was not a "political election promise".

The ruling Barisan Nasional coalition is seeking to appease voters who abandoned it during 2008 polls on complaints over the slow pace of promised reforms.

On Monday, The Malaysian Insider reported that Najib could dismantle the ISA as early as this week as he seeks to gain new momentum ahead of a general election expected within a year.

A legacy of Malaysia's fight against communists, the ISA allows for the indefinite detention of people seen as a threat to national security but critics say it has become little more than a government tool to quell dissent.

Najib released 13 detainees under the ISA when he assumed office.

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