

Kit Siang asks if ISA out before next polls
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By Melissa Chi

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 17 — DAP leader Lim Kit Siang asked today if the Internal Security Act (ISA) will be repealed before the next general election is called, or if it will simply remain a “work-in-progress” to be trotted out as vote bait.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak announced on Thursday that his government will repeal the ISA and lift three Emergency declarations. He also announced plans to revise several security and media laws during the next Parliament sitting.

“If Najib is to be believed, that the repeal of the ISA and the removal of other draconian laws had been in the works since April 2009 when he became prime minister, then Najib’s announcements on Malaysia Day eve should mark the final step in government review and reform of oppressive laws and its readiness to fully implement them when Parliament meets on October 3, tabling all necessary legislative changes for parliamentary sanction,” Lim said in a statement today.

The veteran opposition lawmaker pointed, however, out that Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz had said there was not enough time to repeal the ISA when Parliament next meets in October and that the draft replacement laws would be tabled during the next sitting in March.

The Ipoh Timor MP further claimed that Najib’s announcement came not as a result of the “comprehensive review” of the laws, but were the result of electoral pressure after the “catastrophic loss of public confidence in his leadership”, both nationally and internationally, from the “disastrous government mishandling of the 709 Bersih 2.0 peaceful” rally for free and fair elections in Malaysia.

Lim, a former ISA detainee, added that if the repeal of the ISA and the removal of other similar security laws had been seriously reviewed since Najib took office in April 2009, “the arrogant, ham-fisted, high-handed and mindless repression and clampdown” on the Bersih 2.0 campaign including the arrests of six Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM) under the Emergency Ordinance and “ridiculous arrests for wearing Bersih 2.0 T-shirts or just wearing yellow” would not have taken place.

“Najib has only himself to blame for the scepticism and cynicism about his sincerity, commitment and steadfastness to democratic, electoral and legal reforms because of his own record as PM since April 2009,” he said.

Lim also demanded the prime minister explain if the replacements for ISA and other laws allowing detention without trial, would be the “reincarnation of these very same draconian features in a new format”.

The DAP parliamentary leader then heaped pressure on Najib to extend his reforms pledge to encompass laws such as the Universities and University Colleges Act, Sedition Act (AUKU) and the Official Secrets Act.

“Najib must not deride but sincerely address the sea of doubts and questioning about his

commitment and resolve to introduce a more open and democratic environment in Malaysia, upholding human rights, a free and responsible press, as well as the principles of accountability, transparency and integrity," Lim said.

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