

Pak Samad says ISA repeal plans are result of public pressure
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By Debra Chong

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 19 — National laureate-turned-Bersih icon Datuk A. Samad Said mocked Datuk Seri Najib Razak today for his government's refusal to admit the planned ISA repeal was a result of public pressure, especially from the young who want democratic change.

He also criticised the prime minister, saying Najib "had not learnt from past mistakes".

Samad said poetry could become a 'weapon' to stir the government into action. — File pic "For 54 years, they did not think at all that the ISA should be scrapped. Suddenly they are inspired and refuse to admit that this is because of pressure from certain groups, among them our youth, that we cannot take it anymore," the bespectacled poet was reported as saying in Harakah Daily today.

The soft-spoken 79-year-old, who cuts a striking figure with his long, snowy-white beard, scorned the sixth prime minister for claiming sole credit for last Thursday's historic announcement.

"The prime minister in the last two or three days said... Oh, we... only we are the ones to repeal the ISA, but he did not tell that it was because of the pressures that drove him to change it," Samad said at yesterday's launch of the book "Puisi Jadi Senjata" (Poetry Becomes Weapons), a compilation of poems by youths at the Central Market Annexe here.

"Without those pressures, I don't think [the ISA will be repealed] because it is a very useful suppression tool," said the man fondly called Pak Samad.

Samad said poetry was not important just for its artistic value, but could become a "weapon" to stir the government into action.

"There are those who say art is just for play, for entertainment. But in the hands of the youth, poetry has become a weapon," he said, praising young Malaysians for their desire for change.

Samad urged the youths to use the power of not just poetry but their votes too to end oppression in the coming polls.

"I hope their voices will inspire a regime change," he said, reminding the youths that they could only blame themselves if change does not happen.

On Thursday night, the prime minister announced the repeal of the ISA and the three Emergency Declarations when both the Dewan Negara and Dewan Rakyat have their next sitting.

He said new laws will be enacted to protect the peace, harmony and security of the country.

He also announced that the government will do away with annual printing and publishing permits with permits that can be cancelled if regulations are flouted.

The opposition Pakatan Rakyat (PR) has claimed that BN had lifted the idea from its Buku Jingga manifesto.

Najib however said the decision to scrap the ISA was part of his promise to amend the controversial law when he took office in 2009 and the need for a stable government to ensure the country's future prosperity.

"If politics in our country is in a state of flux... and we do not have political stability, it will affect the country badly," the PM had said, adding that any lack of stability would put off foreign investors.

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