

## **Will Singapore Bow To Pressure To Put An End To ISA?**

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SINGAPORE, Sept 19 (Bernama) -- Will Singapore bow to the aspirations of interested parties to abolish its Internal Security Act (ISA), following Malaysia's move to put an end to the preventive detention law?

Currently, this is a hotly debated issue among Singapore netizens, academicians, opposition, analysts and individuals, alike.

On Sept 15, in a nationally-televised speech on the eve of Malaysia Day, Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak announced that his government would repeal two controversial laws which allow for detention without trial -- ISA and Emergency Ordinance - as well as lift licensing curbs on the media and review laws forbidding free public assembly.

The announcement is widely dubbed by analysts as the boldest policy changes taken by Najib since he took over the government administration in 2009 from his predecessor, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Najib said the changes were aimed at having a modern, mature and functioning democracy which would continue to preserve public order, ensure greater civil liberty and maintain racial harmony.

The ISA and the Emergency Ordinance, which allow suspects to be detained without charge for up to two years, will be replaced by two new laws.

Former Singapore presidential candidate Tan Jee Say has urged the government to abolish the ISA and set up a commission on inquiry to foster national unity.

In his posting on the Singapore Community Online Citizen website, he said, to bring closure to the ISA story, the commission should look into all cases of arrests under the ISA.

The objective is to seek truth and reconciliation, rather than punish those who were responsible for the ISA detention.

ISA was first implemented in Malaya by the British in 1948 to combat the armed insurgency of the Malayan Communist Party during the Malayan Emergency.

The Emergency Regulations Ordinance 1948 was enacted by British High Commissioner Sir Edward Gent.

The Malayan Emergency ended in 1960 and the ordinance was repealed.

However, preventive detention was retained.

Responding to media enquiries on Malaysia's move, Singapore's Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) defended its status quo, saying the ISA continued to be relevant and crucial as a measure of last resort for the preservation of its national security.

In a statement on Friday, MHA said the ISA in Singapore had only been used to deal with threats of subversion, racial and religious extremism (such as inciting racial or religious hatred, strife and violence), espionage and terrorism.

Local television Channel NewsAsia reported today that the announcement last week that Malaysia would repeal its ISA had raised questions and generated a debate as to whether Singapore should follow suit.

The Workers Party manifestos, including the 2011 election manifesto, proposed the abolition of the ISA in Singapore.

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