

IGP: BN may lose power if ISA issue not addressed
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 23 — Barisan Nasional (BN) may lose the next general election if the ruling coalition does not tackle issues surrounding the Internal Security Act (ISA), says top cop Tan Sri Ismail Omar.

The Inspector-General of Police wrote this in a book that was published before Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak announced plans to repeal the security law last week.

In the book titled "1 Malaysia Menjana Negara Sejahtera dan Bahagia Menjelang 2020", Ismail (picture) said the law, introduced in 1960, would continue to be a hotly-debated political issue, increasing support for the opposition.

"The government is said to continue using the double-edged sword of the ISA. For the government, it is important to maintain peace and national security but the opposition will continue to gain public sympathy and voter support," he wrote.

He said "if the government does not manage this issue well, it will lead to defeat in the next general election."

Ismail, who replaced Tan Sri Musa Hassan as police chief in September 2010, said that even though the government had promised to review the ISA when Najib became prime minister in April 2009, many had doubted this pledge.

But Najib announced on September 15, the eve of Malaysia Day, that his administration would repeal the ISA and other security laws to give more freedom to the public.

The prime minister said the law, which allows for preventive detention, would be replaced by two laws that he promised would be limited to acts of terrorism and would never be used for political reasons.

In the chapter titled "Peace and Security Towards Forming a Developed Nation," Ismail wrote that he expected the post-2008 election landscape to continue in the future.

He said that after Pakatan Rakyat (PR) gained four states and denied BN its customary two-thirds majority of Parliament, "the political situation at the state level has been uncertain and fragile. This is expected to prolong into the future."

He cited as an example the BN takeover of Perak in February 2009 after three assemblymen left PR.

Ismail also wrote that pre-emptive action taken by the police to nab key men in groups such as Jemaah Islamiah, Darul Islam, Al-Qaeda and Abu Sayyaf since the 9/11 attack in 2001 was the main factor in keeping Malaysia safe from militant threats.

The ISA allows for detentions without trial and was enacted for use against communist terrorists but has been criticised over the years when it was deployed against other

activities.

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