

**March ISA repeal a 'cop out', say Pakatan MPs**  
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**By Yow Hong Chieh**

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 3 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak's March deadline to abolish the Internal Security Act (ISA) is a "cop out" given the likelihood that he will call snap polls soon after Budget 2012 is passed, say opposition lawmakers.

PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar said the prime minister's decision to defer scrapping the law when elections could be called as early as January showed that he was insincere about the reforms he announced just over two weeks ago.

"I did harbour some hope at the beginning... but again, he hasn't been forthcoming in the delivery of his promises," she told The Malaysian Insider, saying that this amounted to a "cop out".

The Lembah Pantai MP said there was no excuse for delaying the ISA repeal given that Najib himself made the decision, chiding the prime minister for not already having a draft to present to Parliament.

She urged the Najib to look up previous proposals — including the Emergency Revocation Bill that Pakatan Rakyat (PR) tried to table in April — to speed up the law reform process.

"If the Attorney-General cannot do the job, I would invite the prime minister to take whatever is there and just get the job done," Nurul Izzah said.

Liew said the public wanted action, not words.

DAP international secretary Liew Chin Tong said it would be "extremely unwise" of Najib to call a general election before he repeals the ISA as that would damage what remains of his credibility.

He stressed that the public was keen on actions, not words, and warned Najib he ran the risk of repeating former Prime Minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's mistakes if he did not deliver quickly.

Abdullah, led Barisan Nasional (BN) to its worst-ever rout in Election 2008 — it was the first time since 1969 that the ruling coalition had failed to secure a two-thirds parliamentary majority — after the public turned on him for failing to deliver on promised reforms.

"If he wants to call elections, he'd better push through the ISA (repeal) in this Parliament session. Otherwise people are going to take a very cynical view," Liew said.

Bar Council president Lim Chee Wee said he would like to see reforms take place before Najib seeks a fresh mandate but pointed out there was no need for any replacement to the ISA.

"Malaysia doesn't need any detention-without-trial laws because it has already effectively strengthened its legislative provisions to take into account, and deal with, the threat of terrorism," he said.

Lim said he would like to see reforms take place before Najib seeks a fresh mandate. Lim said it was therefore disappointing that the government was contemplating two new laws to deal with terrorism and subversion but stressed that the Bar should be consulted on any replacement legislation.

The prime minister said over the weekend that the ISA would be scrapped in March and that his reform timetable would instead begin with the repeal of the Banishment and Restricted Residence Act when Parliament reconvenes on Monday.

"Next week I will begin the process but ISA will be done in March as we need to draft two new laws," Najib had said after chairing an Umno supreme council meeting.

He also said amendments to the Police Act to allow for freedom of assembly other than street protests will likely be tabled in next month.

Najib announced a raft of reforms, including the lifting of three states of emergency, in his Malaysia Day address and vowed to grant Malaysians greater freedoms.

Along with the parliamentary select committee on electoral reforms, the repeal of the ISA appears to be a key concession by Najib to win back middle Malaysia before snap polls expected early next year.

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