

Guan Eng fears Najib simply rebranding ISA
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By Clara Chooi

GEORGE TOWN, Sept 16 — Lim Guan Eng today expressed disappointment that the government plans to replace the Internal Security Act (ISA) with two new security laws, and argued that the reforms announced by Datuk Seri Najib Razak last night fell short of being meaningful.

Saying he welcomed the prime minister's move to repeal the ISA, the Penang chief minister was still concerned the introduction of two new laws in its place meant the exercise may be a repackaging of the controversial Act.

"Yes, of course it is good news but if it is going to be replaced by another two laws, then is there just going to be another two ISAs?"

"We do not want to see a situation where you are pouring old wine in a new bottle," he told a press conference here.

Lim, an ex-ISA detainee, claimed that Malaysians want the element of "detention without trial" completely removed from all preventive laws.

He said such detention may be reasonable only if used for a very limited timeframe, after which detainees must either be released or charged in court.

Najib announced reforms to the country's security and press laws last night, and the lifting of three Emergency Declarations when both the Dewan Negara and Dewan Rakyat sit next.

Apart from repealing the ISA and amending provisions in the Police Act regarding peaceful assembly, the prime minister also announced that the government will do away with the annual printing and publishing permits requirement as provided under the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA).

Today, Lim said Putrajaya should repeal the PPPA along with the ISA instead of merely amending the provision governing the issuance of printing licences.

"I am a victim of the PPPA too... I was detained for 18 months. That section that allows a person to be charged for printing false news still remains. We are disappointed that the PPPA was not repealed entirely," he said, adding that the law could be replaced with a Freedom of Press Act.

Lim then mocked Barisan Nasional (BN) component party members like MCA, Gerakan and MIC for supporting Najib's reforms, pointing out that its leaders had previously backed the ISA.

"Now, they are trying to claim credit for the announcement by Najib. I am sure Malaysians can distinguish who is the sheep and the wolf in sheep's clothing," he said.

Lim said Malaysians should be credited for the reforms instead, as a significant number of the electorate had voted for the opposition in the 2008 general election.

"They supported the opposition who were fighting for greater freedom. It is also a result of the 'Arab spring'... so many governments, dictatorships fell because, in modern times, this does not work any longer," he said.

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