

**Kit Siang tells Najib to put money where his mouth is**  
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**By Shannon Teoh**

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 19 — Lim Kit Siang has challenged Datuk Seri Najib Razak to withdraw the ban on Bersih, free the judiciary and repeal other oppressive laws before boasting of becoming “the best democracy in the world.”

The DAP parliamentary leader insisted that despite plans to repeal the Internal Security Act (ISA) and other security laws, Malaysia was still “among the worst democracies in the world where citizens can be arrested for wearing yellow.”

Lim was referring to the arrests of nearly 200 ordinary Malaysians and politicians for wearing yellow Bersih T-shirts during the police crackdown in the days leading to the electoral reform group’s July 9 rally.

“The question is, when will the unreasonable and undemocratic ban on Bersih be revoked?” he said.

Putrajaya’s crackdown on the rally that it deemed illegal resulted in nearly 1,700 arrests, scores injured and the death of an ex-soldier as teargas and water cannon was fired to disperse tens of thousands of demonstrators.

The Ipoh Timur MP also said that key institutions, especially the judiciary, must recover their “professionalism, independence and integrity.”

Lim said that the judiciary had these qualities before what he called a “series of executive assaults” beginning with the 1988 judicial crisis that resulted in the sacking of the Lord President, Tun Salleh Abas, and two Supreme Court judges.

He also said that Malaysia must undergo a “total overhaul of undemocratic laws” such as the Universities and Universities Colleges Act, Official Secrets Act and Sedition Act before it can be said to be on the “path to become the best democracy in the world.”

PM Najib had announced last Thursday the repeal of the ISA, the three Emergency Declarations and also the need for annual printing and publishing permits when both Dewan Negara and Dewan Rakyat have their next sitting.

The Umno president said the new laws will be enacted to protect the peace, harmony and security of the country. He later admitted that the move was “risky but necessary for our survival.”

The Pekan MP also said in his constituency yesterday that the reform package he announced was “for the betterment of the country” and to “turn Malaysia into a nation that practices the best parliamentary democracy in the world.”

Najib’s Malaysia Day address was seen by political observers as a bid to reclaim middle Malaysia after the disastrous handling of the Bersih rally that saw the Najib administration being widely criticised in the international media just as he was pitching the country to

foreign investors.

The latest survey from local pollster Merdeka Center also showed that Najib's popularity slid to 59 per cent this August from the 72 per cent high in May 2010, fuelled by rising concerns over the surge in living costs and the Bersih clampdown.

Lim also challenged Najib to present a "full blueprint of how he proposes to make Malaysia the best democracy in the world" when Parliament reconvenes on October 3.

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