

Banishment Act not used for 24 years, says Najib
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 5 — The government is repealing the Banishment Act as it has been unused for 24 years and the Immigration Act already allows for the repatriation of foreigners.

Datuk Seri Najib Razak said today that as the law was last used in 1977, it was “high time the government repeal the Banishment Act.”

“There are other legislative mechanisms to handle matters that are meant to be protected under the law,” the prime minister told Parliament when opening debate on the repeal of the law.

Najib said this directly after seeing lawmakers pass the repeal of the Restricted Residence Act, kicking off the reform package announced in his Malaysia Day address.

The raft of reforms appears geared to win back middle Malaysia for Barisan Nasional before a general election expected early next year.

Among others, the reforms include amendments to the Police Act to allow for freedom of assembly next month; the repeal of the Internal Security Act in March; and a parliamentary select committee on electoral improvements.

Najib’s administration came under heavy fire internationally for its clampdown on the July 9 Bersih rally for free and fair elections.

During the rally, police used tear gas and water cannons to disperse tens of thousands of demonstrators in chaotic scenes that resulted in nearly 1,700 arrested, scores injured and the death of an ex-soldier.

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