

ISA replacements must embrace global rights values, UN chief says
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 22 — Malaysia must keep global rights standards in mind when it drafts up the replacements for the soon-to-be-repealed Internal Security Act (ISA), UN chief Ban Ki-Moon said during his visit here today.

The colonial era security law is set to be revoked during the present parliamentary session and will be replaced by two new laws, as part of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's reforms pledge last year.

"I hope the government will ensure that the replacement laws will be in full compliance with international human rights standards," Ban was quoted as saying by the AFP news service today.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said as recently as March 12 that the new laws were still being drawn up.

"I have not seen the final draft. It will be brought to Cabinet first before being tabled," he had said then.

Hishammuddin had previously also said the new laws would continue to allow for detention without trial — one of the most criticised characteristics of the ISA.

Authorities have also continued to brandish the law despite its planned repeal, most notably in a sweep of 13 suspected Islamic militants in Sabah last November.

These have led to opposition criticism of the new laws as an attempt to pour "old wine in new skin".

In the AFP report, Ban also urged Malaysia to embrace electoral reforms to arrive at "truly transparent and credible system", one that will "take into account all legitimate concerns expressed by relevant stakeholders".

Najib's reforms pledge and the subsequent formation of a parliamentary select committee on electoral improvements can be traced back to the massive July 9, 2011 street rally organised by Bersih 2.0.

His administration came under heavy fire for its clampdown on the Bersih rally for free and fair elections.

Police fired tear gas and water cannon to disperse tens of thousands of demonstrators in chaotic scenes which resulted in nearly 1,700 arrested, scores injured and the death of an ex-soldier.

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