

**Najib: Government will protect, not limit individual freedom**  
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**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, April 11 — Malaysians have matured and are ready for a new era where the government's duty is to guard their rights instead of restricting individual freedom, Datuk Seri Najib Razak said today.

According to Bernama Online, the prime minister explained that this was why his administration had decided to propose reforms to the country's security laws, including rescinding three emergency proclamations, repealing the Internal Security Act (ISA) and enacting new, less restrictive legislation in its place.

"The government believes that after more than half a century since independence and practising democracy, Malaysians have reached a high level of maturity.

"And in view of this, we are now ready to enter a new era where the function of government is no longer seen as limiting freedom of the individual, but instead, ensuring that basic rights protected by the Constitution for each individual is assured," he was quoted as saying by the news agency in his speech at the installation of Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah as the 14th Yang di-Pertuan Agong at Istana Negara here.

After appropriate consideration, Najib said a balance had finally been struck between an individual's freedom and national security.

Apart from scrapping old laws that have often been criticised as draconian, such as the ISA, Restricted Residence Act 1933 and Banishment Act 1959, Najib's government had also passed the Peaceful Assembly Act 2011 to allow large public gatherings and proposed amendments to the University and University Colleges Act 1971 to lift the ban on student politics.

In the Dewan Rakyat yesterday, the government tabled the Security Offences (Special Measures) Bill, a fresh law to replace the ISA that is specifically meant to curb terrorism and specific offences that threaten national security.

Under the new law, the element of detention without trial is done away with completely and an individual can only be held for a maximum of 28 days for the purpose of investigation.

Under the ISA, a suspect can be detained first for 60 days before being sent for further confinement for up to two years, on orders from the Home Minister.

The new Bill also prohibits arrest of an individual because of his political belief or affiliations, as was promised by Najib last year when he first announced the raft of reforms to the country's preventive laws.

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