

**Najib pledges more reforms**  
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**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, April 16 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak pledged today to review the Sedition Act and replace the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 as part of a slew of legislative reforms he hopes will sway voter support for his Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition in a general election expected to be called soon.

The prime minister made the announcement when tabling the Security Offences (Special Measures) Bill for second reading in the Dewan Rakyat this morning.

The Bill, proposed in the House for first reading last week, seeks to replace the Internal Security Act, a law enacted 52 years ago to fight the Communist insurgency.

“The government is neither afraid nor nervous to compete in the democratic arena.

“We are open because we believe the era of government knows best is over. We believe that we have done the best for Malaysia,” Najib (picture) told the House and was greeted by loud thumps on the table by parliamentarians showing support.

The prime minister’s latest round of reform proposals today comes as the ruling BN pact moves into the final leg of its five-year mandate, which expires in April next year.

He told the House that the newly-proposed security Bill does not mark the end of reforms under his administration’s Political Transformation Programme (PTP), which was kicked off on the eve of Malaysia day last September, some seven months ago.

“Be assured that the government will continue these changes and political transformation efforts,” he said, before announcing a review of the Sedition Act.

Najib however stressed that three principles must remain in the evolution of the country’s legal framework, which is to prevent acts that lead to hatred or insult towards the King and state Rulers; that incites evil intentions and hostility among the races; and that questions the rights, position, prerogative and sovereignty of the Malays, Bumiputeras and those of other races, as enshrined under the Federal Constitution.

On the new law to replace the PPPA, Najib gave his assurance that the government would fulfil its promise to abolish the requirement on media organisations to apply for annual printing licenses.

He said the new Act would also include provisions for the formation of a “Media Council” that will allow the media industry to be “self regulatory”.

Najib also told the House that those arrested under the Act would be allowed to make file for habeas corpus in court to challenge their detention.

“In short, the powers of judicial review are returned entirely to the court, unlike the ISA.

"In accordance with this, I would like to stress that the government and authorities would respect whatever decision the court shall make.

"In other words, a person who has been freed shall not be rearrested to be investigated for the same offence," he said.

Najib also announced that the government will form a special committee to review the entire Act "from time to time".

The committee, he added, would also be tasked to monitor the implementation of the Act and make recommendations for improvements.

"The committee will comprise members who are not only from government agencies but also the Bar Council president and Suhakam," he said.

In part V of the Security Offences Bill covering trials for security offences, Najib said there is a stipulation that all cases will be tried in the High Court.

"Taking into consideration the seriousness of these security offences, it is proposed that a special court be formed to hear cases under this law.

"With this, we believe that we have done the best. We will continue carrying out these efforts for Malaysians... clearly, our work is not yet over," he pledged.

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