

PM: ISA scrapped as it gave no political benefit
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PUTRAJAYA, July 9 — The Internal Security Act (ISA) was repealed because it no longer provided a political edge to the government of the day, Datuk Seri Najib Razak said today.

“We abolished ISA because it doesn’t help us politically. You don’t kill anyone politically by putting them in ISA,” Najib said today during the opening of a dialogue with public service personnel here.

“It only enhances them by putting them in ISA,” he added.

Najib stressed, however, that “all the (existing) ISA detainees’ positions still remain”.

The premier also said he had decided to remove the Emergency Ordinance (EO), which had allowed for indefinite detention without trial, as it has been rendered irrelevant by technology.

“Previously, when someone commits an offence, we would catch them and send them far away,” he said.

“Now, there is no use for that because when that person is away, he can use his cell phone to continue his work. That’s why we got rid of EO,” he added.

On September 15 last year, Najib had announced his plan to repeal the ISA and the three Emergency Declarations in his Malaysia Day address to the nation.

The ISA was originally drafted to address the communist insurgency of its day, but was later said to have been subverted into a tool for the government to stifle political dissent.

It developed notoriety when it was used during the 1987 political crackdown known as “Ops Lalang”, when over a hundred people — primarily opposition leaders and activists — were arrested under the law.

Following Najib’s announcement, the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) government admitted to having used the ISA in the past for “wrongful reasons” but urged their detractors to look forward instead of dwelling on history.

Najib came to power in April 2009 with the promise of reviewing the ISA but decided on doing away with the security law that critics say has been abused by Barisan Nasional (BN) for political purposes.

But his administration replaced the ISA with the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act, which has since come under similar criticism.

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