

**Majority Of People Do Not Want A Return Of ISA Says Najib
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PUTRAJAYA, May 10 (Bernama) -- The government is firm on its stand to repeal the Internal Security Act (ISA) as it is convinced that this is the wish of the majority of the people in the country.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said as the people became more open and mature, he believed that they did not want their opinions to be stifled or live in a state of fear.

"I believe the majority of Malaysians want more latitude for political discourse.

"If you make an evaluation, not all want to return to the era of the ISA," he said in a special interview with Bernama TV aired via the Astro 502 channel Saturday night.

Najib, who is also the Umno President, was interviewed for an hour at the Prime Minister's Office by Bernama Editor-in-Chief Datuk Zulkefli Salleh, Bernama TV chief executive officer Datuk Ibrahim Yahaya and assistant editor Jamaluddin Muhammad in conjunction with the 68th anniversary of Umno on Sunday.

Najib also refuted the perception of a handful of people who regarded his patience as a weakness to act.

"No. I do not regard that as a weakness. I would like to ask, do they want a situation where anyone who expresses an opinion is arrested under the ISA (Internal Security Act)? Do we want that?

"Surely, the majority of Malaysians do not want such a situation.

"They want us to be a society that has latitude to express opinions, even if they differ," said the prime minister.

However, he reminded the people not go to the extent of causing harm to the country.

In 2011, the government fulfilled the pledge to implement various reforms in the national legislation, which included the repeal of three Emergency Proclamations which led to the abolition of the Emergency Ordinance, the Internal Security Act (ISA) 1971, Banishment Act 1959 and the Restricted Residence Act 1933 as well as amending the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984, repealing Section 27 of the Police Act.

Subsequently, the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (SOSMA) was gazetted in June 2012 aimed at maintaining public order and security after the abolition of the ISA which, among others, involved the detention of individuals without trial under the old act.

Also introduced was the Peaceful Assembly Act 2012 aimed to ensure the freedom of speech according to proper channels besides ensuring that public peace was not affected to protect the rights and freedom of others.

Responding to the pressure by certain quarters who wanted the ISA to be brought back, Najib said the government was convinced that the new laws introduced provided adequate power for the government to act against any quarters attempting to destroy national peace and harmony.

He said that besides SOSMA, stern action could also be taken under the Sedition Act on anyone trying to touch on sensitive issues, or to take any action that could lead to racial fights in the country.

"We certainly take action based on the law in the country but not to arrest anyone arbitrarily under the ISA. I believe if we do this, more people will be angry at the government," he said while drawing attention to the fall of governments in the West Asian countries as a result of adopting more stringent political policies.

Based on this consideration, Najib said, the government could not only accept the views of certain groups because what was important was the views and opinions of the majority voice.

Najib said that as a leader, he was prepared to do anything that was considered the best after taking into consideration public acceptance, and at the same time, he was confident that what the government had done all this while was the best for the country.

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