

Keep Sedition Act, Facebook users demand on Najib's page
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In the past few days, Malaysian social media users in favour of the Sedition Act have flooded Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's Facebook page, with requests that he not repeal the colonial-era law, which they say safeguards Islam, Malays and the royal institution.

The posts on Najib's official page, ranging from threats to pleas, come in the wake of the prime minister's reiteration on September 5 that he was committed to repealing the act and replacing it with the proposed National Harmony Act.

"What else do you want to abolish after this? We voted for you not so that you follow the opposition! You think your actions can maintain peace in the country?" said Ashraff Alias in a post that appeared on Najib's wall.

"Just you wait. It will be harder for you to control them. Don't blame the grassroots for not doing their job when that happens! It is wrong for you to listen to the opposition rather than the grassroots!

"If you want to follow them so much, then join them! We don't need a weak leader like this!"

In another post, Bahazelah Wahab said he felt nervous over the act's repeal, as it had helped "shut the mouths of those who questioned religion, race and the Malays".

"Even though the act that stops me from saying anything seditious will be gone, I don't think I will be able to say anything any more because I will be too disappointed."

Lynda Camellia said she had lost respect for Najib and would rather stay at home and sleep than vote for Barisan Nasional in the next general election.

"What's the point of voting for BN if our views have no value? When you are threatened even a little by the opposition, you run helter-skelter... Thank you, father of Abolishment," she said yesterday.

Many posts on Najib's Facebook echoed their sentiments, with a number even adding that they wished the repealed Internal Security Act 1960, which allowed detention without trial, be restored.

Michael Yong wrote on Najib's Facebook today: "Most of the rakyat are urging the prime minister not to repeal the Sedition Act and to restore the ISA. Please listen to us."

Saharuddin Lela, who claimed to be an Umno member, said many of his peers would no longer support BN if Najib continued with his plan to repeal the Sedition Act.

“Umno’s hope is that the ISA is returned for the safety of the religion, Malay race and the sultans,” he added.

The ISA, which allows for detention without trial, was repealed in 2011 following protests from civil society as well as opposition leaders.

But Netizen Adamin Aidil said that Najib’s move indicated he had apparently not learned his lesson after abolishing the ISA.

“You want to abolish all the acts that protect harmony and happiness... wasn’t the lesson you learned from repealing the ISA enough?” Adamin said today.

“Can’t you see the chaos Malaysia is in with all these troublesome gatherings? Are you not satisfied seeing the hate between the races, the insults towards Islam, the Malays being belittled, the treason against the sultan?”

Many of the posts included the hashtag #kekalkanaktahasutan (maintain the Sedition Act), which was reminiscent of the hashtag used by critics of the act, #hapuskanaktahasutan (abolish the Sedition Act).

In recent weeks, Putrajaya has hauled up and charged a number of opposition politicians as well as an academic with sedition in the largest crackdown the country has witnessed since October 1987’s Operasi Lalang.

On Friday, Muhammad Safwan Anang, a former chairperson of Solidariti Mahasiswa Malaysia (SMM) was found guilty of sedition and sentenced to 10 months’ jail over a speech delivered on May 13 last year.

Azmi Sharom, a Universiti Malaya law professor, was charged with sedition on Monday over remarks in a news portal on the 2009 Perak constitutional crisis.

In recent weeks, a number of opposition politicians – PKR vice-president Rafizi Ramli, Padang Serai MP N. Surendran (PKR), Shah Alam MP and PAS central committee member Khalid Samad, and Seri Delima assemblyman R.S.N. Rayer (DAP) – have all been charged with sedition.

Seputeh MP Teresa Kok (DAP) and Batu MP Tian Chua (PKR) are also facing trial for sedition, while former Perak MP and Changkat Jering assemblyman Nizar Jamaluddin (PAS) was charged with criminal defamation for a statement he allegedly made two years ago.

The sedition charges come two years after Najib first promised to repeal the Sedition Act 1948.

Najib in July 2013 announced for the second time his intention to repeal the

66-year-old act when he was interviewed by the BBC, saying it would be replaced by a new National Harmony Act. – September 7, 2014.

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