

BN reps toe the line over the assembly bill

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As opposition mounts against the upcoming Peaceful Assembly Bill, BN parliamentarians are seen to be toeing party lines in support of the Bill, amid minor reservations.

They collectively agreed that the Bill was a progressive start for reforms but raised doubts on the enforcement of nitty-gritty provisions.

syed hamid albar exclusive interview larger pix 231008 05Kota Tinggi Umno MP Syed Hamid Albar (right) agreed that democracy must be practised responsibly.

“But there is quite a number of requirements, like the ban on foreigners from joining assemblies, and children. How will this be enforced? The enforcement of this can be quite tedious.

“It is something which should be reviewed. We need to be careful on the practicality of things,” said the former home minister.

Content with the rest of the provisions, Syed Hamid said that it addressed the needs and wants of the people.

“We also need to look at the ban on street protest. People will want to express themselves. It will be difficult to control, although the intentions are good,” he said.

Dewan Rakyat deputy speaker Wan Junaidi Jaafar said the Bill fulfilled the demands by various parties who had requested to axe the permit requirement under the Police Act.

“Under the new law you don’t need a permit, just a condition that you must satisfy. Apart from that you can have an assembly without needing a permit from the police - this is more relaxed although it gives more work to the police,” he said.

Infringing on the rights of others

The Santubong PBB MP, who is well-versed in legal matters, even cited the words of renowned British judge Alfred Thompson Denning or Lord Denning, that “your rights end when the rights of others begin”.

“That is what is reflected in the law that is going to be debated tomorrow. It is not just the rights of the people organising the procession but also the rights of the bystanders that must be taken into account... so this says you cannot have (a protest on the street) because it is infringing on the rights of others.”

parliament house leak leakage 050508 wan junaidi Taking security and safety as a primary concern, Wan Junaidi (left) added that when the state’s rights exist, the individual’s rights have to be subservient to the rights of the state.

The Peaceful Assembly Bill 2011 was tabled in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday by Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz and expected to be debated tomorrow.

The Bill will replace public assembly restrictions stipulated in the Police Act 1967.

In tandem with the Peaceful Assembly Bill, amendments were also tabled to repeal corresponding provisions in the Police Act, including the requirement for a permit to hold an assembly.

‘More structured’

MIC vice-president and Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's sk devamanyDepartment SK Devamany (left) hailed the Bill as the government's "political transformation", breaking away from the norm of suppressing freedom of expression.

"BN itself is transforming, (we are getting) closer to decision-making and governance. One of it is the Emergency Ordinance, it was lifted, I see it as something welcoming because the abuses are very rampant on the ground," said the Cameron Highlands MP.

"As the nation grows and matures it will calibrate itself and slowly adapt to the psyche of the people and this is necessary right now," he added.

Science, Technology and Innovation Deputy Minister Fadillah Yusof (right) said that the Bill must be studied comprehensively.

"It is a sign of the government's commitment to listen to the feedback from the people. The government is giving space for the rakyat to air their opinions," opined PBB's Petra Jaya parliamentarian.

"It has been looked at in a holistic manner, taking into account the rights of both the majority and the minority. Not just a selected few," said Fadillah.

The experienced lawyer reiterated that the Bill was "more structured" and generally viewed it a "positive move".

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