

Kit Siang: Limit minister, police role in assembly law
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has been urged to revamp the Peaceful Assembly Bill 2011, particularly in limiting the role of the home minister and the police.

Veteran opposition lawmaker Lim Kit Siang said the Bill seeks to empower the home minister as the final arbiter on whether assemblies could be held.

It also does not address the long standing issue of police bias against dissidents in allowing assemblies, as pointed out by the 2005 report by the Royal Commission on the police.

Rightfully, said Lim, the Bill should allow the courts to be the final arbiter, citing an example from the the Queensland Peaceful Assembly Act 1992, which was supposed to be the model used for the Bill.

“To end all politicking and bias, and suspicion that the police are serving the agenda of their political masters, the role of the home minister as the final arbiter in the Bill should be removed and replaced by the courts.

“The Australian home minister and the various Australian state police ministers have no role whatsoever in the decision-making process on freedom of assembly in Australia,” said Lim.

PSC needed

Lim said this was just one of many objections by civil society, human rights groups and concerned Malaysians towards the Bill.

He said that more time must be given to study the implications of what he called a “very badly drafted” law, reiterating calls by civil society that a Parliamentary Select Committee ought to be convened to scrutinise the Bill and source public feedback.

As such, Lim said Najib should reconsider the attempt to force the Bill through Parliament, which will begin debating the Bill tomorrow.

He warned that should the Bill be forced through, it will prove that the premier had not learned from his misjudgments in the mishandling of the Bersih 2.0 rally on July 9.

“Najib should be forewarned that he is heading for another political disaster after his Bersih 2.0 misjudgement if he rejects the proposal for a PSC on the Bill,” said Lim.

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