

Assembly Bill: 'Small groups to be most affected'

Malaysiakini.com

Disember 14, 2011

Patrick Boehler

Small interest groups will be the ones most affected by the new restrictions introduced in the Peaceful Assembly Bill 2011 once it is passed, creating a new culture of obedience.

NONEPKR vice-president Tian Chua (right), who is also the Batu MP, said today the law is unlikely to drastically affect large political movements, which would continue to attract large crowds, even in the confines of stadiums.

However, ordinary citizens, interest groups, community groups, labour unions and young people were more likely to be affected.

"Apartment tenants will not be able to go to the streets to protest against housing developers. Mothers cannot participate in political rallies if they cannot bring their children along.

"Now, children can't even participate in protests on environmental protection. Those with business or political interests will abuse the law (to stop protests).

"This is the dreadful culture that the new Bill will bring about," said Chua, who has led countless protests on various issues over the past 15 years.

Chua in the hot seat over walkout

He made his remarks at a public forum on the Peaceful Assembly Bill 2011, which will be debated by the Dewan Negara soon, at the Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall yesterday.

NONETwo other panellists at the forum, Bersih 2.0 steering committee member Wong Chin Huat and political analyst Ong Ooi Heng (left), concurred with Chua that local issues would be further silenced with the new Bill.

Wong said that the maximum RM20,000 fine stipulated in the Bill would deter poor people from holding any form of protest.

However, Wong disagreed with Pakatan Rakyat's decision to walk out during the Dewan Rakyat debate on the Bill and therefore, not voting on it.

"I want my representative to vote, not walk out," said Wong, while asking Chua to explain why the latter did so.

One member of the audience agreed and asked Chua whether a vote for the opposition in the coming general election would be futile if they would not express their views in Parliament.

In reply, Chua justified the walkout as the strongest form of protest which the opposition could resort to.

'Be creative to circumvent new law'

During the debates on Nov 30, only three MPs from Pakatan Rakyat were allowed to debate the Bill, which was rushed through in several hours and passed.

NONELater, Wong (right) suggested that the people take up more creative ways to circumvent restrictions in the Bill, such as taking part in the KLCC 'picnic' event, which has been held for three consecutive Saturdays.

Wong said the three gatherings had proven to be both peaceful and lucrative for KLCC, as demonstrators would spend money at the shopping outlets.

“Every time we think of demonstrating, we should think of KLCC, let’s first demonstrate then go shopping,” he said.

“KLCC is where all the tourists are... this is where I will wait for you to beat me up... if I have to lose blood, then I will make sure it gets on television,” he added, jokingly.

The fourth round of the event to be held in protest against the Bill will be held at 2pm on Saturday, at the same venue.

15 nabbed at 'silent' pro-academic freedom demo

Copyright © 1999-2011 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/184108>