

Govt agrees to amend Peaceful Assembly Act

> Changes to be tabled at next Parliament session will abolish, among others, legislation on requirement of venue owners' approval: PM

KUALA LUMPUR: The government has agreed to amend the Peaceful Assembly Act 2012 (Act 736) to make it easier for the public to hold peaceful gatherings in the country, the Dewan Rakyat was told yesterday.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the Bill to amend the Act, which is scheduled for tabling at the next Parliament session would, among others, abolish Section 11 of the Act relating to the requirement of approval of owners of the assembly site.

He said organisers would, however, be required to notify the police five days before the gathering is held to enable the authorities to take necessary steps to manage security control and traffic.

"With this, several previous actions, including the investigation into the anti-

corruption rally involving university students, will be halted and no action will be taken.

"The same applies to the hunger strike and protests (regarding) Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (Sosma) a few days ago, no action will be taken."

He was replying to Khoo Poay Tiong's (PH-Kota Melaka) question on whether the government is prepared to amend Act 736 to make it easier for the people to assemble peacefully without having to seek permission from the relevant parties.

Anwar said although the proposed amendment would only be tabled at the next Parliament session, the moratorium on the Act would apply for the time being, Bernama reported.

"We have informed police that while the

amendment is being made, the moratorium allows for notification to be given. Although there is some flexibility, there are still regulations to be followed, especially if it (a rally) is planned in the palace compound or security areas.

"That's why there needs to be a notification so that police can call the organisers, learn how many people are expected, prepare weapons requirements or get assurance that they would control the participants and clean the area after the peaceful assembly. I don't think that's too complicated."

On whether the government is prepared to review or abolish Sosma, Anwar said the law should be clear and not be misused for other purposes, as experienced in cases involving the Internal Security Act.

He added that no country in the world, including Malaysia, is exempt from the threat of terrorism, and it cannot be taken lightly and requires specific laws.

"While we support freedom and democracy, we must distinguish that there are still elements that lead to violence and terrorism which require a law that is quite different from the method currently applied," he added.



EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT ...The prime minister's wife and Bandar Tun Razak MP Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail with the prime minister's political secretary Datuk Azman Abidin (left) and Cheras district police chief ACP Aidil Bolhassan at an event to present aid for students in her constituency. - **BERNAMAPIC**