

Assembly Bill bars those below 15
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The Peaceful Assembly Bill also allows the police to dictate the terms in order to preserve security and public order.

KUALA LUMPUR: The much-awaited Peaceful Assembly Bill was tabled in Parliament this morning and among others prohibits children below the age of 15 from participating in public assemblies.

The bill, which allows the police to determine the terms in order to maintain public order, stresses that children cannot be recruited or be allowed to attend such events.

Those who flout these rules will be slapped with a fine not exceeding RM20,000.

Under the Restrictions and Conditions clause, the bill proposes that district police chiefs or OCPDs be empowered to impose restrictions and conditions with regard to an assembly.

To preserve security and public order, the OCPD may determine the date, time, duration and manner of assembly.

The OCPD may also place restrictions based on the concerns and objections of parties with vested interests and on any other matters that the police deem fitting and necessary.

The bill was tabled by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz in the Dewan Rakyat for the first reading together with a bill to amend the Police Act 1967, namely Section 27 which stipulates that a police permit is required for an assembly.

Among the salient points of the Peaceful Assembly Bill are:

- No streets protests are allowed
- Non-citizens cannot protest
- Organisers must give a 30-day notice before the gathering to the OCPD
- Those below 21 cannot organise an assembly
- An assembly cannot be held in a prohibited place or within 50m of the prohibited place
- Some of the prohibited places are places of worship, petrol stations, train tracks, kindergartens and schools, airports, water treatment plants, ports, docks, canals and marinas
- Organizers who are unhappy with the restrictions and conditions (Section 15) may appeal to the Home Ministry who would have to reply within six days

- The police may arrest without warrant organizers or participants who do not comply with the restrictions and conditions imposed, those who bring along children, or carry arms to the assembly
- The Home Minister, by publishing in a government Gazzete, may amend any of the said sections in the Bill, including adding prohibited places
- The Home Minister is also allowed to make regulations for the better execution of the Bill

Those who fail to adhere to the regulations can be imposed with a fine not exceeding RM10,000.

MPs will debate on the proposed Bill after the debates on the Budget 2012 conclude.

The Peaceful Assembly Bill is among the slew of reforms announced by Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak on the eve of Malaysia Day a bid to create a freer society.

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