

**Peaceful Assembly Bill passed**  
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THE Dewan Negara yesterday passed the Peaceful Assembly Bill 2011 which guarantees the right of Malaysians to gather peacefully.

It was approved by 39 senators with eight against.

Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Liew Vui Keong, in winding up the debate, said critics of the bill were only out to confuse the public.

"Of course citizens have fundamental rights, but the freedom given cannot be absolute.

"The bill is part of the government's efforts and commitment to the right of every citizen to assemble peacefully.

"It is also the the responsibility of the government to ensure that the rights of those who want freedom and peace are also protected."

The bill provides for restrictions and conditions to be imposed by police. These include on the conduct of participants, payment of cleanup costs, cultural or religious sensitivity and historical significance of the place of assembly, and concerns and objections.

The bill also allows for appeals to the home minister against the conditions and restrictions.

Liew said that extensive research was conducted and several international laws on the right to assemble became a yardstick in formulating the bill.

"Reference was made to the Peaceful Assembly Act 1992 of Queensland, Australia; Assembly Act 1999 Finland, Public Order Act 1986 United Kingdom, and the Assembly Act 2008 Germany."

Last month, the bill was passed by the Dewan Rakyat after a heated debate. Six amendments had been made to the bill, including shortening the notice period required to be given to the police for any assemblies, to 10 days from 30 days as originally proposed.

Earlier, the Dewan Negara approved the motion to revoke three emergency proclamations. One of them was the Emergency Proclamation 1969 which was issued on May 15, 1969, following the racial riots.

The other two were the 1966 and 1977 emergency proclamations issued on Sept 14, 1966, in Sarawak and Nov 8, 1977, in Kelantan.

They were aimed at resolving political disputes in the two states.

Liew, who tabled the motion, said the move to annul the emergency proclamations was made because the conditions, which threatened security and public order then, no longer existed.

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