

Najib says assembly Bill 'misinterpreted'
The Malaysian Insider
November 28, 2011
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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 28 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak was forced to defend his Bill regulating public assembly, saying that its provisions had been grossly "misinterpreted".

Calling a hasty press conference to "clarify" matters, he blamed Pakatan Rakyat (PR) for "confusing" the public with regards to the 30-day notification requirement.

"Actually the wording is within 30 days, it can be within five or 10 days but that word led to so much confusion so we decided that 10 days to be specific, so that there will be no doubts," Najib (picture) told reporters here in explaining the government's decision to amend some provisions of the Bill days after it was first tabled in Parliament.

Opposition lawmakers have labelled the move as "haphazard" and have demanded the government withdraw the Bill and not amend it.

Najib said the previous 30 days' notification did not mean a month's notice was needed.

He also said people could assemble at "designated" areas like stadiums at "any time", and that police could not stop it from happening.

"You just have to inform the police you are having the gathering, in fact you can even inform within 24 hours.

"For the sake of argument, let's say you want to demonstrate against Israel if it had attacked, say, Iran or something then you can have a gathering at a designated area," the prime minister said.

He said for non-designated areas, only 10 days' prior police notification was needed for the authorities to negotiate with people living in affected areas and to get their feedback.

"Our act is a big change from the current situation," Najib stressed.

"Other baseless claims that we are more draconian than Myanmar and all other rubbish, those people are just out to confuse the public," said the PM.

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