

Umno MP says public protests can cause insanity
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 29 — An Umno federal lawmaker said today that joining public assemblies can cause sane people to go crazy.

Kota Belud MP Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan said when debating the Peaceful Assembly Bill that “psychological analyses” done by enforcement agencies in the United States found that mass gatherings had a psychological impact on people.

“A lawyer can go insane. A teacher who teaches schoolchildren discipline can lose his mind. This is a mob effect,” the Barisan Nasional (BN) backbenchers vice president said.

The Sabahan lawmaker (picture) said this after insisting that the Bill, which has been criticised for being more repressive than laws governing public rallies in countries such as Zimbabwe and Myanmar, was to “protect public order.”

Jempol MP Datuk Lilah Yassin also added that “maybe 28,000 want street protests but this law protects 28 million Malaysians” who want to go about their daily lives.

Critics have said the proposed law, which bars street protests, is more repressive than those in countries like Myanmar, which has one of the world’s poorest human rights records.

Myanmar’s military-dominated Parliament passed a law last week allowing street protests and a notice period of just five days, fewer than the 10 days required by the Peaceful Assembly Bill.

The Bill prohibits assemblies from being held at dams, reservoirs, water catchment areas, water treatment plants, electricity generating stations, petrol stations, hospitals, fire stations, airports, railways, land public transport terminals, ports, canals, docks, wharves, piers, bridges, marinas, places of worship and kindergartens and schools.

Pakatan Rakyat (PR) has called for the Bill to be withdrawn and put before a parliamentary select committee.

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