

Concern over Johor housing Bill

Ruler will be able to meddle in state govt affairs under law

JOHOR BARU: Constitutional experts have expressed reservations on the Johor Housing and Real Property Enactment Board Bill 2014, saying it would enable the Johor Sultan to meddle in the affairs of the state government.

Among others, the Bill will empower the Ruler to appoint board members, oversee its accounts and also dissolve the board.

It is learnt that Sultan Ibrahim ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar would also be able to determine the remuneration of board members, approve the appointment of a director and pass the estimated expenses for each following year before seeking the state government's approval for the allocations.

Mentri Besar Datuk Mohamed Khaled Nordin and State Housing and Local Government Committee chairman Datuk Abdul Latif Bandi, who will be chairman and deputy chairman of the board respectively, have tried to soothe the ruffled feelings by assuring that they would take full charge.

However, there are concerns being expressed on both sides of the political divide, with Barisan Nasional and Pakatan Rakyat assemblymen saying there would be a clear conflict of interest as the Johor Ruler was involved in business including property development.

The assemblymen have been seeking clarification from the State Legal Officer on various clauses since receiving copies of the Bill about two weeks ago.

Constitutional law expert Dr Abdul Aziz Bari said the Sultan could play an active role in

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— DR ABDUL AZIZ BARI

state administration including that of checks and balances without getting involved in the manner spelt out in the proposed Bill.

"The proposed Bill by the Johor government will allow the Sultan to have direct involvement in the state administration. It is unnecessary and may compromise the concept of constitutional monarchy practised in Malaysia," he stressed.

Two Barisan Nasional assemblyman, who spoke to *The Star* on condition of anonymity, called for the Bill to be deferred to allow for more time to scrutinise it.

"The power to establish the board lies with the Johor State Assembly and as such, the powers to revoke or disband it should lie with the Assembly," said one of the assemblymen.

Johor Opposition Leader Dr Boo Cheng Hau, who expressed concern, said Pakatan Rakyat would make an official stand after a meeting with its assemblymen tomorrow.

There are 38 Barisan and 18 Pakatan assemblymen in Johor.



Disputed law: Under the Bill, Sultan Ibrahim can interfere in state administration matters. — Bernama