

**Postpone Johor bill, urge Umno man and Perkasa
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Umno supreme council member Mohd Puad Zarkashi has urged the postponement of the Johor Housing and Real Property Board Bill 2014 over concerns that it that will blur the lines between the monarchy and executive.

"As a rakyat of Johor, I sincerely suggest, if possible the tabling of the bill on Monday be postponed so that there can be proper research, scrutiny and review.

"There is no need to rush. Whatever it is, we must defend the concept of a constitutional monarchy, which is the separation of the monarchy and executive system," he was quoted as saying by Utusan Malaysia.

He is the first senior Umno leader to voice out against the bill after former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad's warning yesterday that it could cause disrespect for the royal institution.

Puad's (right) call is echoed by Johor Perkasa chief Samat Atan who wanted a more thorough review of the bill, according to the Umno-owned newspaper.

Utusan also quoted academic Chandra Muzaffar urging that the bill be put off as it violated the principles of a constitutional monarchy while the National Council of Professors governance, law and public policy cluster chief Nik Ahmad Kamal Nik Mahmood said the sultan's involvement was "unusual".

Utusan campaign

The remarks were part of extensive reaction pieces on the bill which was featured on the newspaper's front-page yesterday and again today under the title "Desakan Tangguh" (Demands to postpone).

The daily produced five articles featuring various personalities against the bill, which was first highlighted by Malaysiakini in an exclusive report on Wednesday.

However, after the extensive coverage against the bill, Utusan quoted Mahkota state assemblyperson Md Jais Sardy blaming Malaysiakini for "speculating" on the bill.

"The speculation in Malaysiakini are the views of DAP state assemblypersons in the state who are seen wanting to confuse society particular, Malays, to create negative sentiments against the sultan and government so that they can be divided," he was quoted as saying.

The bill, if passed, will see the creation of the Johor Housing and Real Property Board and grant the sultan executive power over it, including appointing board members, determining their allowances, scrutinising the board's accounts as well as being empowered to dissolve the board.

It aims to promote and undertake the development of housing and real estate property in Johor.

Concerns on both sides

Yesterday, Malaysiakini reported that BN backbenchers in Johor as well as at the federal level were upset with the bill even though the state government under Menteri Besar Khaled Nordin (left) was keen to have the law passed.

Prior to that, the state opposition had also privately raised concerns over what the bill entails for the principle of the separation of powers, but were worried about being on a collision course with the state monarchy.

In a separate report, Khaled was quoted by Utusan Malaysia as saying that executive powers will still rest with him despite the bill granting the sultan certain powers in the board.

"I want to clarify, the menteri besar is automatically the chairperson (of the board) and the deputy is the housing and local government exco.

"Therefore executive powers rest with me and whatever decision or suggestions will be on advice of the menteri besar," he was quoted as saying.

The issue has been picked up by all major newspapers today, among them include Berita Harian, The Star and New Straits Times which gave front-page treatment to the bill.