

Johor Pakatan still wants Housing Bill deferred
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Johor Pakatan Rakyat insists on a deferment of the tabling of the Johor Housing and Property Board Bill 2014, despite the state agreeing to amend clauses to do with the sultan's powers.

In a press conference today, Johor Opposition Leader Dr Boo Cheng Hau said that this is as the bill has several "loopholes" which could allow for corruption and abuse of power.

At such, the opposition pact urged the state government to not table the Bill tomorrow but instead form a select committee to scrutinise it.

Boo (right) said this after an emergency meeting on the bill following Johor Menteri Besar Mohamed Khaled Nordin's announcement today.

Also present were Johor DAP chief Liew Chin Tong, Johor PAS chief and Parit Yaani assemblyperson Aminolhuda Hassan (left in picture below), PKR Bukit Batu assemblyperson Jimmy Puah and other Pakatan Johor assemblypersons.

According to Boo, the loopholes are in sections 24, 27, 39 and 41.

Section 24 states that the Johor Housing and Real Property Board, which will be formed under the bill, may accept and give gifts on behalf of the board for all or any of the purposes specified in this bill.

Section 27 says that the board may lend money to its officers to purchase a house and car or may grant study loans or scholarships to its officers or their children.

Meanwhile, Section 39 of the bill allows the board to acquire immovable property which does not belong to the state in accordance with laws relating to the acquisition of land for public purpose.

Section 41 relates that the enforcement officers can at any time enter any housing deemed necessary by the director, to examine any premises or summon and examine any person.

'We don't want a parachuted Bill'

Meanwhile, Liew (below), who is Kluang MP, suggested that the state government table the bill in next session sitting.

"We want a bipartisan bill, we don't want a bill which is parachuted into the state

assemble," he added.

Nevertheless, Boo stressed that Johor Pakatan is supported the spirit of the bill, which is to bring better housing development for the Johoreans.

When asked what the opposition state assemblypersons will do if the state legislature bulldozes the bill as Pakatan only has 18 out of 56 seats in the assembly, Boo is keeping his cards close to his chest.

"The strategy is always a secret. When we cross the bridge, you will know it," he said.

He also admitted that Pakatan waited until the night before the bill to be tabled to openly oppose it, and after the amendments were announced, as it worried to be labelled as "anti-royalty".

"We feel that there is always a tendency to bring us to be labelled as 'anti-ruler'. But now the concern is over," he said.

Malaysiakini in an exclusive report last Wednesday revealed that the Johor Housing and Real Property Board Bill 2014 will empower the Johor sultan to appoint the board members, oversee its accounts and even dissolve the board.

The board, which aims to promote and undertake the development of housing and real estate property in Johor, could result in conflict of interest as the sultan is a key player in the state.

Johor MB Mohamed Khaled Nordin (left) softened his position and announced that the Bill will be amended to not extend as much power to the sultan after the issue attracted heated debate nationwide.

Among those opposing what is perceived as an extension of executive powers to the sultan are BN representatives.

The bill will be tabled to the state assembly tomorrow and both sides are expectedly to fiercely wrestle over this matter as tomorrow is the last day of the sitting.