

PM to lose power to declare 'security area'

KUALA LUMPUR: The prime minister will relinquish his authority to declare any place a "security area" allowing the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to do so under amendments to the National Security Council (NSC) Act 2016. The Agong will only act on the advice of the NSC.

This is among several changes that the government is seeking under the National Security Council (Amendment) Bill 2019 that was tabled for first reading by Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Mohamed Hanipa Maidin, at the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

According to the explanatory statement in the Bill, "Clause 3 seeks to amend Section 18 of the Act to provide that the King may declare any area in

Malaysia as a security area on the advice of the council".

The NSC Act, which came into force in August 2016, had always been a contentious issue. There were concerns that too much executive and emergency powers were concentrated in the NSC and the hands of the prime minister.

Under the original Act, the premier was empowered to declare any place a security area for six months, subject to renewal. The council would then take command of the security forces and police those areas deemed to be a security risk.

Anyone who commits or is suspected of having committed an offence in the security area can be searched or arrested without a warrant.