

Johor sultan to be involved directly in state administration if new bill passed, says Utusan Malaysia
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Johor will be the first state in Malaysia to give powers to the sultan to be involved in state administration if a new bill is passed by the legislative assembly next week, Utusan Malaysia reported.

The proposed bill was for the establishment of a Johor Housing and Property Institution, and if approved, gives Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar authority over the institution's accounts and a direct hand in the development of real estate in Johor, the Umno mouthpiece said today.

"The bill also contains an enactment which provides the sultan with the authority to dissolve the institution's board of directors and make new appointments," it said.

"The board of directors of the Johor Housing and Property Institution will also take over the management of housing and property developments in the state."

If the bill was passed, Johor would be the first state in Malaysia to give powers to the sultan to be involved in the state administration.

The move to enable the sultan to be involved directly in state administration has raised concerns among legal experts who said it went against the concept of royal institutions and parliamentary democracy, according to the report.

"The government is responsible for all administrative policies with the exception of religious issues," constitutional law expert Dr Abdul Aziz Bari said in a statement to Utusan.

"If the authority is incorrect, then who should be responsible? For example, in the federal administration, if the sultan is in power, then what role does the prime minister play?"

"In the hierarchy, rulers have the authority over religion, but the state administration does not fall under their purview," he said.

Social activists said interference from the sultan in the state administration would open up opportunities to certain parties to exploit the institution of Malay rulers.

Khairul Anwar Ramli said the sultan needed to allow the management of state land to remain with the state government.

"He can still give his opinion and views if there is anything untoward going on," he was quoted as saying by Utusan.

However, state local government and housing committee chairman Datuk Abdul Latiff Bandi said the sultan's powers would be subject to the state Constitution.

"According to the Constitution, the sultan can give and receive advice on relevant issues," Latiff said.

"The state government had previously included a clause during the establishment of the Johor State Economic Development Corporation, now known as Johor Corporation (JCorp)."

Latiff told Utusan that JCorp was well known not only locally, but internationally as well.

"So there is no need to make the establishment of the Johor Housing and Property Institution as an issue," Utusan quoted him as saying.

Latiff said the institution would be chaired by Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin. – June 6, 2014.

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