



Judul : House police may distance public, say critics
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DEMOCRACY

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Nurul Fitri Ramadhani
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The House of Representatives' compound in Senayan, Central Jakarta, is a place "open to all citizens to voice their aspirations" — so lawmakers have often claimed.

Such commitment, however, has been called into question after the House and the National Police signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to tighten security in the Senayan compound, which also includes a plan to deploy police personnel in a regular placement under the so-called House police.

Critics said it might instead distance the public from their representatives at the House as a consequence of tighter security, particularly since the plan was brought up only two days after the lawmakers amended the Legislative Institutions (MD3) Law that could criminalize people deemed to have been disrespectful to the House.

"The MoU mostly tends to make the House more unreachable to the people," said Lucius Karus of the Indonesian Parliament Watch (Formappi) recently. "Such a concept of House police is even weirder. In fact, there has been no significant threat there so far."

The House employs around 470 of its own security officers (Pamdal), but sometimes seeks support from the police to provide security during major events or during public protests, which are only allowed to take place outside the complex.

The plan, Lucius said, could also lead to police intervention in legislative affairs, particularly following the inception of another controversial provision in the MD3 Law that practically grants House members a kind of legal immunity during criminal inves-

tigations.

"The true threats in this country are corrupt habits," he said.

Political expert Said Salahudin feared that the presence of armed House police would deter people from freely expressing their aspirations at the compound, saying, "The House building shouldn't look scary to the people."

The idea of the House police was first proposed in 2015 when former speaker Setya Novanto was still in office. The House, at that time, asked for 1,194 police personnel, who would be led by a one-star police general. The House also planned to have them stay a dormitory.

The plan, however, was put on the back burner, particularly after the police force, led by then-chief Badrodin Haiti, opposed the idea and instead suggested that the House strengthen the capacity and capability of its Pamdal.

House Speaker Bambang Soesatyo, who took the helm just recently, insisted that such police deployment could help improve the security level and subsequently benefit people coming to the House.

"We want to create a comfortable, safe and orderly environment for everyone," he said.

Citing his experience in 2003, when a small-scale bomb exploded in the basement of the House compound, National Police Chief Gen. Tito Karnavian, who at that time was with the Jakarta Police, appeared to support the plan, unlike his predecessor.

"I found out that the security system was very loose [at that time]. People could freely come in and out of the complex," he said.

The police, however, have yet to decide when and how many personnel are to be deployed to the House and what kind of security systems are to be implemented.