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LEGISLATION

KUHP bill in limbo ahead of 2019 elections

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The long-deliberated Criminal Code (KUHP) revision bill remains in limbo even as the House of Representatives 2014 to 2019 term nears its end.

The House has been intensifying its deliberation on a bill to revise the Criminal Code, and House Speaker and Golkar Party politician Bambang Soesatyo had pledged to pass the bill by Aug. 17 of this year, but no progress has been made two months after the promised deadline.

The bill is the culmination of decades of attempts to revise the current KUHP, which was adopted almost wholesale from colonial Dutch law.

But some analysts have raised concerns that the many controversial sections of the bill might have turned it into something of a political minefield ahead of the 2019 legislative and presidential elections, particularly the bill's "morality" articles, which regulate, among other things, adultery and fornication.

And lawmakers appear to have been too busy running political errands to ensure their parties win the 2019 elections and abandoned their legislative chores.

At least 511 out of a total of 560 lawmakers reportedly will be contesting in the legislative elections to maintain their seats.

Bambang admitted that the political agenda in the lead up to the elections had shifted the focus of the House members and subsequently affected the performance of the legislative institution.

"Most of the political parties [are focused on] how to win the presidential and legislative elections. That has distracted our time at work. But that is the challenge we have to face in this political year," he said.

Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) politician Arteria Dahlar, a member of House Commission III, which oversees the bill, said, however, that the controversial adultery and fornication provisions, which could potentially criminalize premarital sex and homosexual relations, had been agreed upon by all 10 House factions.

"The other articles regarding adultery and LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities] have all been settled," he said, adding that the commission was only waiting on the government's new draft of the bill, which would remove articles regulating private sector corruption as defined in the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).

Arteria added that the House wanted to finalize the bill before the end of the legislative term.

"Basically, we want to finish this because we want to leave a legacy," Arteria said.

The government has been claiming that there are still several controversial provisions that need to be further discussed, including the much-debated articles criminalizing homosexual activities.

Of the total 50 bills on this year's national legislation priority list, the House has only managed to pass four bills into law: the Terrorism Law, the controversial Legislative Institutions Law (MD3), the Non-tax State Revenue (PNBP) Law and the Health Quarantine Law.

"If they have been less productive recently, what can we expect from them in the remaining days ahead of the elections?" Indonesian Parliament Watch (Formappi) researcher Lucius Karus said.

In a recent survey conducted by *Kompas*, 56.2 percent of respondents said they were dissatisfied with the House's performance.

Bambang said that in the legislation process, the House was committed to advancing quality over quantity.

"We want to make laws that can be useful for the people, not laws that only benefit certain parties," he said.