



Judul : House To Approve Mass Organization Bill
Tanggal : Jumat, 21 Juni 2013
Surat Kabar : Jakarta Post
Halaman : 4

LEGISLATION

House to approve mass organization bill

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THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

The House of Representatives is set to approve a watered down version of the controversial mass organization bill in a plenary meeting next week, after dropping the bill in its last sitting session in April.

Chairman of the House committee deliberating the bill, Abdul Malik Haramain, said all political factions in the House had agreed on the latest draft, which accommodated input from critics, including the country's second largest Islamic group, Muhammadiyah.

"We have revised the draft to include input from the public and we can assure that the bill will not be used as a tool for repression. I think those who are still opposing the bill are not being reasonable because we

have done our best to accommodate as many inputs as possible," Abdul Malik told reporters on Thursday.

Bowing to previous protests from several Muslim organizations that were concerned the bill would pose threats to their ideology, the bill committee has finally included an additional article, Article 3, which says all organizations are allowed to promote other ideologies as long as it does not contradict the country's founding principles of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution.

A ban, however, remains against the promotion of atheism, communism and Marxism.

Abdul Malik said the committee had also added another article to allow mass organizations to expand their operations abroad, as was demanded by Muhammadiyah.

The new draft also drops a re-

quirement for existing mass organizations to register with the Home Ministry.

"In addition to what we have agreed, the bill will not mandate existing mass organizations to register with the Home Ministry as they are already registered with the Law and Human Rights Ministry. It's important for me to say this to avoid misunderstanding," the National Awakening Party (PKB) politician said.

Eight out of the nine political factions at the House have approved the latest draft of the bill. The National Mandate Party (PAN) is the only faction yet to endorse the draft, although it has basically agreed on its substance.

Committee member Ahmad Rubai from PAN said his party is in talks with groups opposing the bill.

"Although we do support the con-

tent of the bill, it's important for us to get support from all organizations affected by it. We're still discussing the matter with them," Rubai said.

Critics argued that the bill, if endorsed, would overlap with existing laws, such as Law No. 24/2004 on the foundation of organizations.

Critics added the bill would also grant the government excessive control in cracking down on groups deemed threats to the country's ideology as well as unity.

"The bill seems to be administrative guidelines for all mass organizations, but it can be an instrument for the state to control the activities of mass organizations, which will likely limit freedom of association and assembly," National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) commissioner Roichatul Aswidah said.