

Deepavali-eve sitting of Parliament criticised

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By Hazlan Zakaria

DAP parliamentarians have expressed displeasure that Parliament will remain in session on Oct 25, the eve of the Hindu festival of Deepavali.

NONE "This year, Deepavali falls on Oct 26. I am therefore surprised that a parliamentary meeting has been scheduled on Oct 25," Ipoh Barat MP M Kulasegaran told a press conference in the Parliament lobby today.

Reading out a joint statement, he said the situation would hamper preparations to hold 'open house' on Oct 26, as well as disrupt prayers for ancestors that are traditionally conducted on the eve by those observing the festival.

"The party hereby calls on the prime minister who is the government leader in the House to cancel the Oct 25 meeting, as it is a practice for Hindus to pray to their ancestors on the eve of Deepavali and (hold an annual) reunion with family members," Kulasegaran said.

He pointed out that all the main roads would be congested on Oct 25, making it difficult for the Hindu MPs to get home from Parliament.

a kugan detention death funeral ummc to puchong 280109 m manogaran "This morning (M) Manogaran (Teluk Intan MP, left) and I met de facto law minister (Mohd) Nazri (Abdul) Aziz and speaker Pandikar Amin Mulia and requested them to vacate the sitting on Oct 25. Both agreed to consider our request favourably and will revert soon," he said.

The DAP representatives questioned the premier's sincerity in announcing that issues faced by Indian Malaysians would be resolved - for instance, examination dates have often clashed with that of the festival.

They recalled that, when launching the 1Malaysia India Students Movement at Universiti Malaya in July, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak had announced that public tertiary institutions would revamp their curriculum and examination schedules to ensure that these do not clash with Deepavali.

Najib was also quoted to have said the decision would resolve the two-decade-old problem affecting Indian students, who have had to miss the celebrations as their examinations have almost always fallen a day before - or even on the day of - the festival.

"Would this have happened if it were Hari Raya?" asked Batu Kawan MP P Ramasamy who was present.

'Be sensitive in fixing schedules'

If the premier's promise holds true, the DAP members said, the government should show the same sensitivity in scheduling sittings of Parliament and government functions.

"This could well be an oversight, but it certainly reflects the need for government officers who are involved in planning meetings to have better knowledge of all festivals (observed)," stressed Kulasegaran.

Also at the press conference were party secretary-general and Bagan MP Lim Guan Eng, Cheras MP Tan Kok Wai and Bukit Bintang MP Fong Kui Loon.

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