

Zahid invites Muslim MPs for briefing on Hadi's bill

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PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang's hudud bill was sidelined throughout this Parliament session due to the Budget 2017 debate, but Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi has indicated that there is still hope for the controversial legislation.

In a letter sighted by *Malaysiakini*, Zahid has invited Muslim MPs to a briefing on Hadi's Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) (Amendment) 2016 Bill.

The letter which carried the deputy prime minister's letterhead was titled: 'Meeting and special briefing to all Muslim MPs about the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) (Amendment) 2016 Bill'.

According to the letter, the briefing will take place at 5pm today at Parliament's briefing hall.

The letter, which was sent out on Nov 18, was signed off by Zahid.

Hadi's bill was the fourth item on the order paper when the final Parliament session for this year commenced on Oct 17.

It never made it to the floor due to various government matters followed by the Budget 2017 debate.

Budget matters are expected to conclude today, with two days of sitting left.

The government can during these remaining two days prioritise Hadi's motion to present his bill.

It remains to be seen if this will be done as there is fierce opposition from BN component parties.

However, Zahid's briefing indicates that the Umno-led government has yet to abandon Hadi's bill despite the opposition from its coalition partners.

In May, Umno's component partners were shocked when the government allowed Hadi's bill to go to the floor.

A private member's bill normally sits at the bottom of the queue behind government bills and are unlikely to see the light of day if the government does not give way.

Despite successfully getting the bill to the floor, Hadi requested that it be withdrawn to allow time for MPs to study the proposed amendments.

Hadi's bill seeks to amend the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965 or Act 355,

which limits the syariah court's punishment to a maximum fine of RM5,000, three years' jail or six strokes of the rotan.

The amendment seeks to remove these limits.

It is referred to as the 'Hudud Bill' as it would ultimately pave the way for the partial implementation of the Islamic penal code, specifically in PAS-ruled Kelantan, which has already passed an enactment to that effect.

For example, the punishment using the rotan under the enactment ranges from 40 to 100 strokes.

However, the Kelantan state enactment cannot be implemented as long as the punishment limits meted out by the syariah courts remain.

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