

No skipping sessions, BN reps told

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TO ensure the Dewan Rakyat is not prematurely adjourned due to lack of quorum, warning letters have been issued to all Barisan Nasional backbenchers to attend all sittings.

The letters, signed by Barisan Nasional Whip Datuk Seri Najib Razak, instructs them not to return to their constituency before the House adjourns.

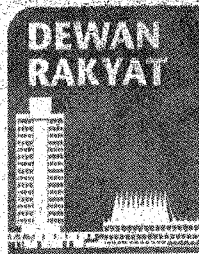
The letters have been despatched to the 106 BN backbenchers, and are expected to reach them by today.

This has been attributed to the House being adjourned on Nov 16 due to a lack of quorum.

The Cabinet at its meeting yesterday ordered that the MPs be issued with the letters to ensure the incident did not recur.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz said the Cabinet wanted the MPs to remain in the House until the session ends.

Previously, the Dewan Rakyat sat from Mondays to Fridays. But MPs complained that they had little time to attend to constituency matters, and thus the sittings were changed to be-



■ Reports by V. Vasudevan and June Ramli

tween Mondays and Thursdays to allow them more time to visit their constituencies.

"But many are leaving for their constituencies on Thursday before the day's proceedings end, leaving the House vulnerable to a possible quorum call from the Opposition which may lead to an adjournment," he said.

When outstation MPs, including those from Sabah and Sarawak, pack their bags and leave for home on Thursday after the morning session, it usually results in a reduction of elect-

ed representatives in the House on Thursday afternoon and evening.

"This has to stop. They better buck up. The Whip is serious about this."

On Monday, the 20 parliamentary secretaries were given a dressing down by Najib during a meeting.

Nazri said the parliamentary secretaries were singled out because there were 20 of them, and if they were all present, it needed only six other MPs to make up the quorum.

Nazri said the "parliamentary secretaries have also been directed to attend all sessions, and not leave until the meeting is adjourned.

"They are supposed to be here, even when their Ministries are not involved in House proceedings," he said.

Nazri said Cabinet yesterday decided that parliamentary secretaries will no longer be required to attend post-Cabinet meetings when Parliament was in session.

Urging them to adhere to the directive, he added: "There are many others who will be happy to fill their position. If they can't do it, just inform the Prime Minister and quit."