

Speaker to consider request for Anwar to attend Parliament, says PKR
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By Eileen Ng

Speaker Tan Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia is looking into Pakatan Rakyat's request for jailed opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to be allowed to attend the current Parliament sitting, said PKR.

The party's deputy president Mohamed Azmin Ali said it is imperative for Pandikar to reconsider his decision in line with democratic principles.

In his first courtesy visit to Pandikar as Selangor Menteri Besar, Azmin expressed disappointment that Anwar was not allowed to participate in parliamentary proceedings despite still being the Permatang Pauh MP and opposition leader.

"The speaker said he will study the issue and will make a stand soon at an appropriate time," Azmin told reporters at the Parliament lobby today.

Two days ago, the Pandikar wrote in a letter to the PKR whip Datuk Johari Abdul, that the decision to not allow Anwar attend the current parliamentary sitting was based on decisions by the Home Ministry and the Prisons Department.

The ministry and the department had rejected similar applications sent to them, respectively, by Anwar's lawyer on February 25 and by his daughter, Lembah Pantai MP Nurul Izzah Anwar on February 27.

It was reported last week that the Prisons Department would not allow Anwar to attend Parliament for the month-long sitting which began yesterday, on grounds that the department had procedures to follow.

The department had reportedly notified the speaker of its rejection.

On the letter from Anwar's lawyer to the Home Ministry, which requested that the Prisons Department be ordered to escort Anwar to Parliament, minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said only the Pardons Board, the Attorney-General and the speaker had the final say whether the jailed lawmaker could attend the current sitting of the legislature.

Zahid's statement was criticised by Anwar's lawyers, who said it was a direct contradiction of Section 13(1) of the Prisons Act (1995), which states that the Prisons director-general "shall be responsible" to the minister for the due observance of the provisions of the law.

Former attorney-general Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman also said last week that no one had the legal authority to direct the prison authorities to produce Anwar in Parliament.

He said neither the Speaker nor the home minister had the authority to give the order for Anwar to be produced in Parliament. – March 10, 2015.

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