

**MP: Najib can't champion both moderation and shariah amendment bill**  
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**Ipoh Barat MP M Kulasegaran says the prime minister must lead by example in the push for moderation.**

PETALING JAYA: Ipoh Barat MP M Kulasegaran says Prime Minister Najib Razak's support for a bill enhancing the power of shariah courts contradicts his stand on moderation.

In a statement today, the DAP national vice-chairman said if Najib wanted the people to fight against extremism, he, as prime minister, should lead by example.

Kulasegaran was responding to Najib's parliamentary reply yesterday to Pasir Puteh MP Dr Nik Mazlan Nik Mohamad, in which he stressed the importance of promoting moderation in Malaysia.

Najib said it was crucial for the government and the opposition to be on the same page in the matter, adding that moderation was "the best way of life for all Malaysians".

Kulasegaran agreed with Najib that "moderation must triumph over extremism and that all politicians should play their part to promote moderation".

However, he claimed, there had been occasions where Najib had failed to convince the people that he was committed to moderation by his silence and failure to act against people showing extremist tendencies.

He said G25, an organisation of retired senior Malay civil servants, had warned that Malaysia risked losing its identity as a model of religious moderation and multiracialism if PAS were to be allowed to introduce its brand of Islamic penal laws.

Kulasegaran said PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang's private member's bill to further empower the shariah courts was causing disunity, even within Barisan Nasional which is led by him.

"The RUU355 is now even threatening to break up the BN coalition as its component parties from Borneo have firmly objected to the bill," he said, using the Malay acronym for the Shariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965, also known as Act 355.

He asked why the prime minister was giving his support to such a bill.

The proposed amendments to Act 355 would empower the shariah courts to impose jail terms of up to 30 years, fines of up to RM100,000 and up to 100 strokes of the cane.

Shariah court punishment is currently limited to jail terms not exceeding three years, whipping of not more than six strokes, or fines not more than RM5,000.

The government has said it would take over the bill and table it in the current Dewan Rakyat sitting.

“If the prime minister wants the people to fight against extremism, he should always remember that actions speak louder than words and that as the prime minister, he should lead by example,” Kulasegaran said.

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