

Don't miss Thursday sitting, MPs told ahead of PAS bill tabling
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Bebas says MPs must speak up against the shariah bill and not allow it to move up to the next level.

PETALING JAYA: A group opposing PAS' plans for stiffer shariah punishments in Malaysia has appealed to MPs to attend the Dewan Rakyat sitting this Thursday, when the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) (Amendments) Act 2016 is expected to be tabled.

Bebas said all MPs must be present to speak up on behalf of all Malaysians.

"They must vote 'no' on RUU355," said Bebas spokesman Azrul Mohd Khalib, referring to the bill's Malay acronym.

"Do not let a low attendance in the Dewan Rakyat be the cause for this bill's passage to the next stage."

The private member's bill, twice tabled by PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang, seeks to increase the shariah courts' punitive powers, from the current three years imprisonment, RM5,000 fine and six strokes of the rotan to 30 years jail, RM100,000 fine and 100 strokes of the rotan.

Several Umno leaders had previously voiced support for the bill despite opposition from their non-Muslim partners in Barisan Nasional (BN).

But last week, BN chairman Najib Razak announced that it would not go ahead with a proposal that the government itself table the bill, a move seen as a blow to PAS' hopes of courting support from the ruling coalition's Muslim MPs.

Azrul reiterated Bebas' opposition to the bill, saying the amendments would change the way justice is administered by depending on fear and punishment.

"It will result in inequality. It will cause injustice. Is this the kind of Malaysia that we want?"

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