

## **Don't belittle Islam, warns Hadi on shariah bill**

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**By Minderjeet Kaur**

### **PAS president defends Islamic laws as just and denies the heavier penalties were only geared towards punishing.**

KUALA LUMPUR: PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang defended Islamic laws as meant to “educate” and not to punish criminals, as he presented his motion to table his private member’s bill to amend the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act in the Dewan Rakyat today.

“We remind the non-Muslims. Do not belittle Islam which is the religion of the federation,” the Marang MP said as he hit out at critics of the bill.

He questioned claims that the bill would affect non-Muslims’ freedom to practise their faiths, saying there had not been a single case of non-Muslims being tried under state shariah enactments.

He said the opposition by non-Muslim and some Muslim MPs to the bill showed they were not ready for mature politics.

“They (non-Muslims) have no right to reject this amendment. They do not at all sacrifice their personal rights or the rights of the non-Muslims,” said Hadi.

The bill, which was moved to the top of the Dewan Rakyat’s order paper, seeks to increase punishments for shariah offenders, from the current three years’ jail to 30 years, from the maximum RM5,000 fine to RM100,000 and from six strokes of the cane to 100 lashes.

The bill has been opposed by both opposition as well as BN component parties. The bill, which aims to give wider powers to shariah judges, is seen as opening the path for hudud laws, or Islamic capital punishments for serious crimes, in Malaysia.

But Hadi denied suggestions that the bill was a “back door” to implement hudud, saying crimes such as murder and robbery still came under federal jurisdiction.

Defending the proposal for heavier penalties, Hadi said they were not geared towards punishing the offenders.

“Caning under Islam is different from the civil laws,” he said, before explaining how a convict is punished without causing injuries.

“It may be 100, but it’s different from caning under civil laws.

“It is to educate, not to inflict pain,” added Hadi.

He said Muslims were bound by the Quran to treat even their enemies justly.

“If even with the enemies of Islam we are commanded to be just, what more with non-Muslim citizens who we consider our brothers?”

Hadi’s explanation today comes a week after a meeting of top Barisan Nasional leaders chaired by Prime Minister Najib Razak decided to call off plans to take over the shariah bill.

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