

## No escape for child sex offenders, says Azalina



Azalina and MPs from both sides of the political divide in a show of solidarity for the Sexual Offences Against Children Bill 2017 yesterday.

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**KUALA LUMPUR** — “You can run but you can’t hide,” warned Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department Datuk Azalina Othman, following the first reading of the Sexual Offences against Children Bill 2017.

Azalina said the proposed law covered an extensive range of sexual offences against minors to support existing laws, including catching the perpetrator if the offence had taken place outside the country.

“The extra-territorial application means if you are outside (of Malaysia) and you

commit (the offence), we take you in (Malaysia) and charge you,” she said at a press conference attended by government MPs and those from the Opposition.

Azalina said no one would be spared under the new Bill, including those who withheld information or abetted an offence.

She said most reports that were lodged by family members, whom the child heavily depended on to take to the police stations, would not materialise as family members were one of the biggest perpetrators by withholding information.

“We want to make the Bill more lateral and sort of vertical. I am only giving a general narrative because cases involving children should be dealt in a specific way,” she said.

“So no one is going to escape.”

Azalina said the Bill would not be retrospective and would be read simultaneously with amendments made to the Penal Code on April 3.

Some of the sections in the Penal Code that would be amended included assault and sexual offences and the Criminal Procedure Code. The Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants Act 2007 (Act 670) would also be amended in relation to sexual exploitation.

Azalina said the Bill would be debated next week and was expected to be passed.

“I am excited for the MPs from both the Barisan Nasional and the Opposition to raise issues as we are open for suggestions,” she said.

“Some MPs may feel the punishments are inadequate and we can still amend the sections.”

Azalina said that with the passing of the Bill, cases could be settled quicker.

“There would not be any more postponement of cases for years until the children themselves would forget (the case),” she said.

Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Rohani Abdul Karim said the Bill would touch on offences that were not included in the Child Act 2001.

“The Child Act is more towards protecting the children. We support this new Bill because it covers on the offender extensively,” she said.