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Pas supporter takes offence with media over beer-drinking photo

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Pas supporter Simon Yeo is taking offence with newspapers publishing a photograph of him and two friends drinking beer in front of the Pas operations room in Wakaf Tapai, Terengganu.

In a fax sent to the newspapers from Harakah, the Pas official organ, Yeo, who signed himself off as "a supporter of Pas Pekan Wakaf Tapai", said he regretted that "the Barisan Nasional was distributing the photograph to give the impression that Pas allowed liquor feasts to be held in its operation room".

"I want to stress that the news reports are aimed at putting Pas in a bad light in the eyes of Malays and Muslims," he said.

Yeo confirmed that he had posed for the photograph with his two friends in front of the Pas operations room which is within the Marang parliamentary constituency in which Pas president Datuk Hadi Awang is contesting.

However, he disputed that the actual drinking was in the operations room.

"What actually happened was that a group of Chinese journalists met us after we built the operations room for Pas' Chinese supporters in Wakaf Tapai town.

"I and 10 of my friends were drinking in front of a Chinese shop in the town," the statement said.

"They (the journalists) asked whether they could drink alcohol in Terengganu.

"I said, why not? Every night we drink here."

Yeo said the journalists then snapped photographs and asked him and his friends to pose in front of the operations room which they built "for nonMuslims".

"We took two or three cans of unopened beers to the operations room and allowed them to take photographs. We wanted to prove that Chinese can drink alcohol in Terengganu although not in all places," he said.

"This was to disprove the MCA's allegations that nonMuslims cannot drink beer in Terengganu.

"I regret that this picture has been used by the BN to malign Pas as if liquor feasts are held in their operations rooms and as if Pas provides alcoholic drinks."

The unsigned statement bears Harakah's name as the originating sender of the statement which was faxed at 4.02 pm to the New Straits Times. A fax number - 096237136 - is scribbled on the faxed statement. Calls to the number confirmed it was linked to a fax machine.

Several newspapers published the photograph today and already quoted Yeo as denying he had been drinking in the operations room.

Yeo and his two friends are holding a beer can each and have another seven cans of beer stacked on the table in front of them.

The photograph and article were first published in The China Press three days ago.

In Jerlun, former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Pas was willing to do anything for votes including going against the teachings of Islam.

He said this was proven when Pas served alcoholic drinks to its non-Muslim workers and visitors in one of its operations centre in Terengganu.

"This is Pas ... alcohol cannot be consumed but for the sake of getting

votes, they are willing to serve it (to non-Muslims). They claim to be an Islamic party but their action is clearly against the teachings of Islam, he said.

In Pekan, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak commenting on the incident said Pas was not consistent even when it comes to matters which were contained in their fatwa (decree).

"The law on drinking and preparation of alcoholic drinks is clear and the incident shows that there are Pas members and supporters who do not care about Islamic laws," he said.

He said developments such as this were the reasons that led Barisan Nasional to the conclusion that Pas was just a political party created by humans which would do anything to gain support.