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Azmin should not antagonise lawyers, says Karpal Singh

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - DAP deputy chairman Karpal Singh, accused by a Parti Keadilan Nasional leader of being "yesterday's politician who operates from an air-conditioned law office" said it is from legal firms that the battle to free Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim can be waged.

Responding to accusations from Keadilan vice-president Azmin Ali, Karpal said in a statement that Azmin should also not antagonise lawyers and should recognise the DAP's efforts in trying to secure Anwar's release.

"Azmin should not slight law offices as he himself must seek solace from one, being the venue from which he could seek freedom from the charge he is facing," said Karpal, in reference to Azmin's charge of taking part in an illegal assembly.

On Saturday, Azmin said that Keadilan was prepared to forego co-operation with the DAP unless it received a letter requesting resumption of talks.

Azmin also accused the DAP of being insincere in the negotiations, and described Karpal as "yesterday's politician who operates from his air-conditioned law office".

On the stalled negotiations, Karpal said Keadilan president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail should make a stand on the resumption of talks between both parties on seat allocation for the next general election.

He added that Dr Wan Azizah should clarify whether her party was still willing to continue negotiations instead of leaving the matter in the hands of "immature and erratic" individuals.

"I call upon Wan Azizah to clear the air. No one should unwittingly or otherwise, be allowed to scuttle the negotiations. Barisan Nasional should not be given the opportunity to exploit the differences between opposition parties," added Karpal.

Former DAP MP for Kota Melaka Lim Guan Eng also issued a statement to rebuke Azmin for what he described as "malicious personal attacks against Karpal".

"A genuine democrat will protect another's right to disagree with him and rebut the other with fact and reason. Baseless personal attacks devoid of substance are the sole refuge of the shallow and should have no place in any mature political leadership," Lim said of Azmin.

He said lest Azmin forgot, Karpal's 35-year legal and political career spanned three Prime Ministers from Tun Abdul Razak, Tun Hussein Onn to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"Azmin himself can testify how many of his own leaders and even those from Pas benefited from Karpal's incomparable legal expertise pro bono. For Azmin to show such callous disdain for one of DAP's core leaders is completely unacceptable to members and may well make genuine co-operation with Keadilan at the grassroots out of reach and well-nigh impossible."

Lim said he had expected Azmin to disagree vigorously with DAP in a civil manner.

"I was wrong. But I did not expect a Keadilan leader to hit below the belt by using language normally reserved for BN leaders. DAP members will find it difficult to countenance any form of co-operation with a political party that publicly and unjustifiably insults its core leaders," he added.

Lim said he believed that the Keadilan leadership was sincere in wanting to co-operate electorally with the DAP in fighting the common foe that was the BN.

"But if its leaders persist in ridiculing our top leaders, then it risks alienating the very members in the DAP required to make such co-operation work."

He said Azmin must disavow malice as a weapon in negotiations with the DAP that would only lead to a ruinous relationship.