

Najib-judges meet 'dangerous and improper'
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Despite denials by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and outgoing chief justice Zaki Azmi that the premier's meeting with top judges was out of the ordinary, PKR has not only maintained suspicions of the occasion but described it as "dangerous and improper".

Saying this today, party vice-president N Surendran (right) also said the judges' 'collusion' in the meeting and their conduct at the meeting with the premier was unbecoming of their position as peers to the executive and legislative arms of the government of the country.

"News photos show newly-appointed Chief Justice Ariffin Zakaria greeting the PM at his official car together with outgoing chief justice Zaki who is a former top Umno lawyer.

"The behaviour of the top judges waiting upon the PM in such a manner was inappropriate and subservient... This behaviour of the judges is inconsistent with the doctrine of separation of powers.

"The judiciary, executive and legislature being the three arms of our democratic state are equal in role and stature to each other," said the lawyer-politician in a statement.

"Top judges must not wait on the prime minister," Surendran added.

Najib's assurance 'hollow'

The political activist was remarking on the first official visit by Najib yesterday to the Palace of Justice yesterday, which led to talk that it not only crossed the bounds of propriety between the purportedly independent judiciary and the BN-led administration but signalled the subservient role of the former.

Surendran also noted that it did not bode well for public confidence in the judiciary when its top judges were seen as waiting on Najib, who has been implicated in a number of controversial cases, including with PKR's de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim.

"What confidence can we have that opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim will receive a fair hearing from the appellate judges in his sodomy trial when they are seen publicly cozying up to Najib, who is Anwar's deadly political enemy and determined to bring him down?"

He also described as "hollow" Najib's assurance yesterday that he had gone to lengths to ensure that his meeting with members of the judiciary would not raise any negative views as to the relationship between it and the executive arm of the government.

"I only dared to meet (with the judges) after the chief justice invited me and said there was no problem," Najib had said in his speech.

Najib also said there are precedents from the past as to such meetings.

If the government truly respects the independence of the judiciary, an "independent and transparent judicial appointments mechanism" should have been put in place and action taken against even top figures presently and formerly in the BN government, said Surendran.

"Former PM Dr.Mahathir should also have been brought to justice for tampering with the judiciary in 1988, and action must be taken against the culprits exposed in the Lingam tape scandal," he said.

"We call upon the PM and government to go beyond mouthing empty words and to prove their commitment to a free and impartial judiciary by concrete action."

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