

Karpal: Najib's tea with judges 'ill-advised'
Malaysiakini.com
September 11,2011

Najib's controversial attendance of a tea party with the judges in Putrajaya last Wednesday was "more than ill-advised" primarily because the PM and his wife has both been subpoenaed to appear in court for the high profile Anwar Ibrahim sodomy trial, said Karpal Singh.

The lead counsel for Anwar was responding to prominent Umno lawyer Muhammad Shafee Abdullah's response to criticism over Najib's visit, published in New Straits Times yesterday.

"Shafee Abdullah is at pains, or perhaps beyond that, to point out that Tunku Abdul Rahman, Abdul Razak, Hussein Onn, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, and not to be left out, Abdullah Badawi, during their tenureship as prime ministers had attended functions of the judiciary," said Karpal (right).

However, said Karpal, the difference is that those former PMs had not received a High Court subpoena to appear in court.

"The first four prime ministers are not on record to have subpoenas issued by the High Court for their attendance in court at the behest of the defence, without any attempt being made to set aside those subpoenas.

"Mind you, the subpoena had been issued in an internationally high profile case - the trial of Anwar Ibrahim.

"The prime minister's attendance at the tea party, with this backdrop, was more than ill-advised," said Karpal in a statement today.

He added that the matter was further compounded with the fact that Najib's wife Rosmah Mansor has also received a similar subpoena.

Not new but not proper

The PM's visit during the Council of Judges Conference at the Palace of Justice on Wednesday had drawn flak over the question of separation of powers between the executive and the judiciary.

Outgoing Chief Justice Zaki Azmi defended Najib's visit saying it did not compromise the independence of the judiciary.

Zaki added that such meetings were not new, and that there had been a similar meeting with Mahathir when he was premier on two occasions in the 1990s.

Weighing in on the matter, Shafee yesterday had shot back at critics saying, "Najib knows his responsibilities and boundaries of propriety."

Karpal blasted the Umno lawyer for twisting the lord president Mohammed Suffian's words of 1987 to defend Najib.

At the time, Suffian had gone on record saying, "I like to hear what the problems were with the Bar with the courts which lawyers did not mind discussing informally but not in writing."

Shafee, according to Karpal, had "twisted the argument" in concluding, "What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. If the Bar can socialise with the judiciary, it would be an intolerable argument to suggest that the prime minister cannot attend official functions of the judiciary."

Karpal called Shafee's justifications fallacious, concluding, "That it (Najib's visit) should have been

avoided, speaks for itself.”

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