

Karpal's absence at PAS do raises eyebrows
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Dewan Millenium in Kepala Batas was in a festive, party mood last night when thousands thronged PAS' 60th anniversary last night.

The crowd swelled to about 10,000 to hear PAS spiritual advisor Nik Aziz Nik Mat give his ceramah, a rare occasion in this part of the country, and close the hectic two-day which started on Friday.

Pas 60th anniversary at kepala batas, penangMen with white kopiah and women in colorful tudungs flooded the three-storey building, with hundreds sitting on the floor on mats, some with their children sleeping by their side.

Although mostly religious in content, the Kelantan Menteri Besar peppered his speech with little anecdotes, jokes and hints that sent his audience into fits of laughter.

PAS top leaders, including Abdul Hadi Awang, opposition leader and Permatang Pauh MP Anwar Ibrahim, Penang Chief Minister and DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng were present in the three-hour session which ended at midnight.

Lim had to excuse himself from a 1,500 strong fundraising dinner organised by Bukit DAP in Tanjung Tokong and speed through massive traffic jam on the island to arrive in Kepala Batas by 11pm to witness the closing ceremony of its ally PAS.

Karpal's mystery absence

However, one person of utmost significance was conspicuously absent last night - DAP national chairperson Karpal Singh.

When asked to clarify, PAS deputy president Mohammad Sabu said he does not know the real reason behind Karpal's absence.

NONEIt was unlikely that Karpal had not been invited, as the latter's images could be seen splashed across banners promoting the event all over town.

"It could be a miscommunication, perhaps his office did not get the invitation letter, or he could be not feeling well... he is after all, wheel chair-bound," said the PAS leader, better known as Mat Sabu.

When questioned if Karpal's absence was in any way linked to the recent controversy surrounding PAS insistence on implementing the hudud law, Mat Sabu said "No...no".

When met, PAS central committee member Mujahid Yusof Rawa said he was not aware of the reasons for Karpal's no-show at the PAS event.

NONEEven Lim (right) said he would get in touch with Karpal today to see what had kept the latter away from the do.

"I will telephone him, I will telephone him... If I had work to do, I also would not be able to make it," he told reporters who crowded around him for the answer as soon as the ceramah ended.

According to a journalist who had called Karpal earlier in the day, the veteran lawyer was unavailable to speak to her as he was sleeping.

Many, however, suspected that the Gelugor MP's failure to show up at one of PAS important events was out of dissatisfaction with the developments of the hudud issue.

Karpal's fierce rejection of Islamic laws is well-known since DAP and PAS forged working ties with one another since the late 1990s.

DAP damage control mode

Although Abdul Hadi has tried to allay the fears of non-Muslims by saying syariah laws would not be forced on them, Nik Aziz has expressed adamance in seeing the law implemented at the federal level, and has repeated his desire to realise his wishes.

This is despite an emergency meeting on Wednesday that saw Pakatan leaders professing their commitment to the federal constitution, while respecting the diverse opinions of its partners on the issue of hudud.

It appears that the DAP may still have damage control to carry out in the coming weeks as the 13th general election, which may be called as early as November, looms nearer by the day.

During his speech, Anwar said Pakatan Rakyat's Budget 2011 will be announced tomorrow (Monday), four days ahead of Prime Minister Najib Razak's Budget speech on Oct 7 (Friday).

He added that Pakatan will unveil in detail its proposed expenditure and allocation of financial resouces.

"... the rakyat can see for themselves what the difference is (in governance) between Pakatan and Barisan Nasional," he quipped.

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