

Mosque committees ordered to attend PM function

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All 180 mosques in the district of Batu Pahat, Johor were ordered to send five representatives from its mosque committee to attend Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's event in conjunction with the premier's Johor blitz last Saturday.

The order was issued through an official letter from the district kadi's office dated April 2 which also asked the respective mosque to provide a RM50 allowance for the representatives.

NONE Individuals claiming that this was an abuse of mosque funds for party politics have circulated a copy of the directive on blogs and on Facebook.

During his half-day trip, Najib reportedly arrived in Batu Pahat as early as 9.15am for a walkabout and had breakfast at a local coffeeshop.

He then went to the town's market and mingled with business operators and the public for about 45 minutes before proceeding to Batu Pahat Stadium for another event where he addressed a crowd of 50,000.

The mosques would have contributed close to 1,000 of the people there if the directive was followed.

Najib was accompanied by Johor Menteri Besar Abdul Ghani Othman, MCA president Dr Chua Soi Lek, Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob and Deputy Education Minister and Batu Pahat MP Puad Zakarshi.

Kadi defends directive

Meanwhile, district kadi Bahrin Jalal when contacted by Malaysiakini conceded to issuing the letter (see below).

However, he said the letter was merely a "show of support to our leaders" and to provide exposure to the mosque representatives, which included imams, muezzins and caretakers, in the district.

"We asked them to attend the event as a sign of support for our leaders. This was the first time our prime minister had come to Batu Pahat. So we directed them to listen to his message," he said.

He added that the RM50 "petrol allowance" was drawn from mosques development allocations by the Johor Islamic Affairs Council.

But Bahrin said the mosques did not spend RM45,000 in total to send their representative for Najib's event.

"Not everyone got RM50 - it was RM50 for one car so it was RM10 per person, it was only for petrol, that's all," he said.

He added that there was nothing wrong to be using the money from the government allocation for the purpose as it was considered a programme carried out by the mosques.

