

## **Gov't clears air on PMO's lightning-quick response**

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**By Aidila Razak**

The government has defended its swift response to the Anwar Ibrahim verdict, saying it is normal procedure to prepare statements in advance.

Critics said the Prime Minister's Office's (PMO) statement issued 15 minutes after the Federal Court upheld the opposition leader's sodomy conviction raised questions on collusion between the state and the judiciary.

"It's clear that the politicians, lawyers, communications teams and journalists involved with this case prepared text for guilty and not guilty verdicts.

"Similarly, the government prepared a statement in advance for either outcome. This is entirely standard professional practice, especially in a case that involves public interest.

"To suggest otherwise is intentionally misleading," a government spokesperson told Malaysiakini in an email communique.

The government's quick response raised eyebrows with critics saying it is out of the ordinary for the state to make timely comments on matters of public interest.

For example, critics claimed that when Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 went missing on March 8 last year, the PMO had dragged its feet.

However, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak held a press conference on the same evening (March 8).

As for flight MH17, which was shot down over Ukrainian airspace on July 17 last year, the critics claimed that the PMO took a few hours to issue a statement.

But Najib held a press conference in the wee hours of the morning after learning about the plane's fate.

Critics also pointed out that when the east coast was ravaged by floods last December, the PMO had only responded several days later.

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