

Tiger of Jelutong still hungry for justice
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An enormous oil painting of a tiger is hung prominently on the wall behind the reception desk leading to the ballroom where a birthday bash is being held. It is a happy coincidence, as 'Tiger of Jelutong' Karpal Singh celebrates turning 70.

About 450 guests, mostly family members, friends and political comrades, some from as far as Sarawak, turned up to toast the country's toughest legal eagle and DAP national chairperson, who made a grand entrance with his family in tow, to bagpipes from his alma mater St Xavier's Institution.

Karpal, who is also Bukit Gelugor parliamentarian (centre in top photo, with wife, sons Gobind left and Jagdeep, right), had reason to celebrate as he narrowly escaped a three year jail term for allegedly uttering seditious words against the Sultan of Perak.

karpal bash Karpal's eldest son, 39-year-old Jagdeep Singh Deo, delivered a heart-warming tribute singing his father's praises for being "courageous and principled" throughout his life.

He described how his father's struggles – defending the poor and downtrodden and representing them on pro bono basis – has made a lasting impression on his own life.

Jagdeep joked of how Karpal's frequent run-ins with the law – the Internal Security Act, two sedition charges and 103 police reports – would qualify him for the Guinness Books of Records.

He also related his family's ordeal when Karpal was incarcerated in Kamunting detention camp during the infamous Operasi Lalang dragnet which saw 106 people - amongst them political, social and religious activists - detained without trial in 1987.

karpal article uncommon man "He never gives up on justice. He had always persevered. Indeed, he stands tallest among all of us," said Jagdeep as he related how Karpal inspired him to pursue law in Australia.

"There is an article (left) which says that dad chose to be an 'uncommon man'. I beg to differ. He did not choose it, he was born to be one," he said.

"Although he spends very little time with us, we can never blame him for he has shaped us and many Malaysians to what we are today," added Jagdeep, whose remarks were met with rousing applause.

Still on the prow!

Later, an elderly guest only known as Cheong, thanked Karpal profusely for helping him resolve his problems many years ago, when he was a taxi-driver in Kuala Lumpur.

"I do not really know how to thank him; he has given me a new lease of life. He is a man to be respected by everyone" said Cheong.

ng wei aik with large photo of karpal The party was a lively affair, with a shower of gifts upon the legal eagle, a 20-minute documentary tracing Karpal's legal and political struggles, and performances by Malaysian fusion band AkashA and other guests including his army of

grandchildren.

Karpal gave a brief parting speech at around midnight, thanking his wife for standing by him faithfully through the various trials and tribulations which marked his colourful life.

"I could not have gone through life without her," he said, adding also how much he had suffered and enjoyed being with his DAP colleagues, and beckoning his guests to look forward to the next anniversary.

"We will meet again when I am 80. With the support of everyone, I will be able to drag along until then," he said.

The revelry concluded with a traditional Chinese 'peach bun' ceremony, a birthday bun signifying good health and longevity, which his sons Jagdeep and Gobind Singh Deo fed to their father as a reminder that the Tiger of Jelutong must never be left hungry, until justice is finally served.

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