

Karpal toasts senior comrade Kit Siang
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Legal giant Karpal Singh, who celebrated his 70th birthday yesterday evening at a hotel in Penang, raised eyebrows when he described his decades-long comrade Lim Kit Siang as the 'de facto chief minister' of Penang.

Karpal, who was undeterred by chest pains which saw him admitted into a Kuala Lumpur hospital last week, said during his speech that without Kit Siang, who is Ipoh Timor parliamentarian, the life of the latter's son Guan Eng would be "susah" (difficult).

Karpal mostly likely was referring to the electoral battles that Kit Siang, formerly the MP for Tanjong, had fought between 1986 and 1999, and would have become the head of state if DAP had succeeded then in kicking out its rival and BN component party Gerakan.

Undoubtedly, there would have been some in the audience who took Karpal's statement to mean that the senior Lim was in reality, though not by law, the CM.

Their hopes were dashed, however, when Karpal eventually praised Guan Eng, who is also the party secretary-general, for being a good chief minister.

"Penang is very stable now, Guan Eng is a good CM. We need more good CMs like him," said Karpal, directing his speech to the father and son team, who were seated at the main guest table with other DAP central committee members.

'We need a good PM'

"But more than a good CM, what we need is a good prime minister," added Karpal, who is also the lead counsel for Opposition Leader and PKR supremo Anwar Ibrahim in his Sodomy II case.

Karpal then looked directly across the floor at "the wife of the future prime minister", as he addressed PKR president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, and quipped: "Please ensure that your husband does everything that is politically and legally right (when he becomes PM)".

Azizah, who was seated beside Karpal and his wife Gurmit Kaur, smiled broadly back at him upon hearing these words.

Anwar, who is Permatang Pauh parliamentarian, was not present due to a previous engagement.

Karpal said that Pakatan Rakyat's road to Putrajaya is paved with various constraints, as seen in the sodomy trials that Anwar has had to endure since his dismissal from government in 1998.

Anwar must be vindicated, Karpal asserted, if not by the court of law, then by the "court of public opinion".

"Our battle will continue until we achieve our ends. I am 70, but I do not think I am too old for that," he quipped.

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