

Najib: Backlog could erode trust in govt, judiciary
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PUTRAJAYA (Sept 7, 2011): The backlog of court cases is a problem of inefficiency which could result in an erosion of public trust, not only towards the judiciary system, but also the government as a whole.

However, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the judiciary has taken a smart and quick move to overcome the problem before the situation worsens.

"Malaysia is no exception. This problem of backlog has created a negative impact not only towards the victim or injured party in a particular case but also towards the country's economic growth.

"Foreign investors have to think twice before investing in our country because a delayed judiciary system will affect business development, while business conflicts cannot be resolved within a short time," he said during his first visit to the Palace of Justice here today, at the invitation of outgoing Chief Justice Tun Zaki Azmi.

Zaki also hosted a tea party for Najib, which was attended by 130 judges.

In his speech, Najib touched on the efforts made by Zaki to reduce the backlog of cases during his tenure as CJ.

"Backlog cases in all courts in the country have been successfully reduced by almost 90%, at all levels, in two years.

"As a result, almost three-quarters of all courts in Malaysia now only have current cases which are those registered in 2010 and 2011," Najib said.

Apart from changes and improvements made in the working attitude and culture, computerised technology system and audio visual recording have also been introduced in all courts around the country.

On the visit, he said he wanted to observe more closely the changes and transformation process made by the judiciary body since 2009 under the leadership of Zaki, whom he paid tribute to.

Najib also said Zaki, who is retiring on Sept 12, has played a significant and monumental role in ensuring changes and reforms were implemented.

"He brings credit and merit to the office to which he is entrusted. The government thanks him, congratulates him for a job well done and wishes him happy retirement," he added.

Earlier, Zaki dismissed claims that the judiciary will be "tainted" by having tea with the prime minister, as alleged by several quarters.

Speaking after officiating at the Annual Council of Judges Conference here, Zaki said that there was nothing wrong in having tea with the prime minister at the Palace of Justice in

Putrajaya, or having a photo-taking session with the PM.

Zaki said doing so does not compromise the judiciary's independence.

He emphasised that there was no hidden agenda in the meeting, which was planned to discuss the RM130 million spent to improve the CRT (court recording and transcription) and the judiciary's e-filing system. He added that they were not there to discuss court cases.

"It also will not affect our impartiality and independence in delivering judgments," he said.

Also present at the press conference were incoming Chief Justice Tan Sri Arifin Zakaria and Chief Judge of Sabah and Sarawak Tan Sri Richard Malanjum.

Zaki also said the meeting between the judiciary and the PM was not something new as there had been similar meetings when Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was premier.

The news of the impending meet and tea session with Najib drew criticisms, including from the legal circle with former Bar Council president Rangunath Kesavan claiming the meet "blurs the lines between the separate branches of government".

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