

The day Karpal sneaked in petrol to Parliament to burn evidence
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The best kept secret about a pornographic videotape which lawyer Karpal Singh (pic) submitted to the Dewan Rakyat in 1992 is finally out.

Worried that the videotape would not be accepted and that he could be charged with possession of pornographic material, Karpal prepared a contingency plan. He took into the House a small bottle of petrol inside a specially constructed metal container that fitted neatly into a large briefcase.

The plan was to use the flameproof container to destroy the evidence inside the parliamentary debating chamber if the Speaker, or one of his deputies chairing a session, refused to allow the videotape to be tabled.

"I had earlier conducted a dry run in my office to ensure the videotape can be destroyed quickly if it was returned to me," he told The Malaysian Insider.

This little known story was revealed in the 325-page biography of Karpal, authored by New Zealand journalist Tim Donoghue.

The book titled "Karpal: Tiger of Jelutong" was launched at a hotel in Kuala Lumpur last Saturday by DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang.

The 73-year-old, who is wheelchair-bound following a road accident in 2005, said he knew police would be waiting for him outside Parliament to seize the tape and later charge him.

"I had no defence. I would have been found guilty under the Film Censorship Act, which carries a fine of up to RM10,000," he said, adding that he would have lost his job as lawyer and been stripped of his position as a parliamentarian.

On July 20, 1992, he took the opportunity to hand over the tape when the then-Deputy Speaker Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat was in the chair during the House debate on an amendment to the Companies Act.

While speaking during the debate, he took out the videotape from the briefcase and walked towards Ong.

Having said that the videotape was his gift to his fellow MPs, Karpal was relieved that the unsuspecting Ong readily accepted and marked it as part of parliamentary proceedings.

He said the late Speaker Tun Mohamed Zahir Ismail had subsequently requested him to take the tape back but he refused.

"A police officer even came to record my statement but I refused because the incident took place in the House," he said, citing parliamentary privilege.

Karpal said the briefcase remained within the confines of Parliament until it was handed over to the police.

In December 1989, Karpal had accused then-Dewan Rakyat Deputy Speaker D. P. Vijandran of being in a pornographic video and for this he was suspended from Parliament for alleged character assassination.

A year earlier, a police report was lodged following the discovery of 11 videotapes and four envelopes containing 2,000 photographs which were stolen from Vijandran's safe when his house was burgled.

In January 1990, then-CID director Datuk Zaman Khan revealed that the public prosecutor had ordered the videotapes and photographs destroyed.

Karpal said even former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad once asked him where he obtained the tape.

The videotape Karpal handed to the Dewan Rakyat then became the basis of a police investigation which finally led to Vijandran's conviction for manufacturing evidence in a civil suit in 1994.

Karpal, who was a prosecution witness, finally revealed that an unidentified person phoned him when he was in his Penang legal firm and asked him to collect a videotape left at the office door.

Vijandran was convicted in the Sessions Court in Ipoh but the Court of Appeal in 1999 acquitted him due to material gaps in the prosecution's case.

At the book launch, Donoghue said the "tiger" in Karpal went after his legal and political prey with straightforward logic and humour.

He said when he was looking for an end to the book, the Tiger ended up with a broken back while he was in a taxi in Penang.

"He was forced to lick his wounds for a year while many people around him, including his best friends, suggested he would have been better off dead," he said.

Donoghue said on hearing about the accident, he thought the book would never be published.

It was scheduled to be released in 1999 but was held back after Karpal lost the contest for the Jelutong parliamentary seat in the general election that year.

The book traces his humble beginnings and the many legal and political battles Karpal fought over the past 40 years. — September 12, 2013.

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