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Nik Aziz advises against debate

Sajahan Waheed; Hizreen Kamal; Nik Imran Abdullah
KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - As the Umno and Pas youth movements set the momentum for a debate on Malay rights to take place next month, Pas murshidul aam (spiritual adviser) Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat and senior Umno leaders have advised against it.

But, for all intents and purposes, it is all systems go as Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein said the movement has the "consent from Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad".

"We are not backing out from this," he said today.

On Monday, Pas Youth chief Mahfuz Omar went to the Umno Youth headquarters to hand over a letter agreeing to the debate on Malay rights, a challenge Hishammuddin issued him last Sept 29.

While both Youth chiefs are ready for the "showdown", some elders of both parties are not convinced that it would solve the problem facing the Malays or bring any benefit.

Nik Aziz, who is Kelantan Menteri Besar, said in Kota Baru today that he was against the debate because it would not solve anything.

"It is meaningless as the final decision on party matters is made by the top leadership of both parties," he said.

Nik Aziz said the only way to resolve matters between Pas and Umno was to hold a debate between the party presidents.

"As long as the parties' top leadership does not hold a debate, any debate conducted by their lower rung leadership will not solve anything," he said when commenting on the planned debate between Umno Youth and Pas Youth.

Yesterday, Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin advised Hishammuddin against holding the debate which he felt would bring no good to the Malays.

Today, Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob echoed similar sentiments, saying it was a waste of time.

Adnan, who is an Umno supreme council member, said the truth would not prevail as Pas would keep twisting the facts to suit their own needs.

But Umno Youth members are not letting up. Its education bureau chairman Dr Adham Baba said the debate "is necessary to prove that Umno Youth is sincere in addressing the Malay rights issue and other relevant topics."

"The debate is a long-standing issue and it is important to have it as soon as possible.

"If we choose not to participate in the debate, Pas would label us cowards. Thus we need to face them and prove that we are sincere."

Another exco member, Dr Shamsul Anwar Sulaiman, said the movement had given the mandate to Hishammuddin to proceed with the debate during a recent exco meeting in Kota Kinabalu.

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