

28/09/2002

Nik Aziz: I was drowsy

Sulaiman Jaafar

PAS spiritual leader Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat admitted yesterday that drowsiness had caused that "slip of the tongue" when he remarked that the Prime Minister did not know how to recite the Quran.

Saying he was willing to apologise publicly, he explained that he had taken a nap after dinner and was still drowsy after being awoken to give the ceramah at which he made the comment.

Nik Aziz, who is Kelantan Menteri Besar, was explaining his remark that Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had admitted not knowing how to recite the Quran.

"I do not mind apologising, because I was wrong. I will admit my mistake.

"But if I am right, like in the "gangster" issue, I will do my best to defend myself," he said, referring to the controversy over his having likened God to a thug.

"I fought on even after a minister told me to repent, because I feel I was right," he said after a solat hajat (special prayers) at Pusat Tarbiah Islamiah Kelantan.

Nik Aziz was commenting on calls by Umno leaders, including Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, for him to apologise over the statement.

The Menteri Besar said on Wednesday that what he had meant was that Dr Mahathir did not know Arabic.

In Simpang Pertang, Negri Sembilan, Minister in the PM's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim, when asked whether Dr Mahathir could take legal action against Nik Aziz, said it was up to the Prime Minister.