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Nazri on his own in debate with Pas

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KUALA KANGSAR, Fri. - Member of Parliament for Chenderoh Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz will be on his own against Pas in the anticipated debate on Sekolah Agama Rakyat, as all the 300 entry passes allocated to Umno will be "donated" to Pas.

Nazri said today he would only be accompanied by his private secretary, Chenderoh Umno Youth chief Shamsul Anuar Nasarah, at the event at Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka's Dewan Budaya Tun Syed Nasir on Sunday.

The debate will only be open to invited guests, with 800 passes having been allocated - 300 to Umno, 300 to Pas and the rest to the DBP.

Nazri said he would donate Umno's passes to Pas, as the debate was between him and Pas.

The debate, entitled "SAR: Challenges and Future", will be between Nazri and Pas Youth deputy head Salahuddin Ayub. DBP director-general Datuk A. Aziz Deraman will be the moderator.

Nazri, who is Entrepreneur Development Minister, said it did not matter if there were no Umno supporters with him as he was confident of his stand and was not afraid of the truth.

He said it was a "matter of principle" and Pas should keep its word and ensure the debate happens.

"If there are Umno members around, there could be chaos if sensitive issues are brought up when the debate hots up.

"I want to avoid a scuffle between Pas and Umno - that is why I've decided to give away the 300 passes to Pas," he said after a Qurban (sacrificial) ceremony at Masjid Keroh Hilir, Padang Rengas near here today in conjunction with Aidil Adha.

Nazri said he accepted conditions set by Pas and hoped there would be no further changes, as Pas had altered the venue and topic several times.

He added that once the debate was over, he would swear by the Quran that he, personally, and in his capacity as MP for Chenderoh and minister, had never said that the Government would close down SAR.

"I expect Salahuddin to follow suit," he said, noting that at the special SAR briefing for Umno divisional leaders at the Putra World Trade Centre yesterday, party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had clarified that there was no decision to close down SAR, but that the Government had only decided to discontinue funding.