

'Najib vs Anwar debate' call heats up

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By Aidila Razak

The debate last night between Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin and PKR director of strategy Rafizi Ramli could act as the tipping point for a 'prime ministerial debate' before the next general election.

Asked by moderator Maszlee Malik if it is now time for Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to go mano a mano with Pakatan Rakyat's premier-in-waiting Anwar Ibrahim, the audience got on their feet and cheered.

"In 2008, we saw the McCain-Obama debate, in 2010 the Brown-Clegg-Cameron debate and in 2011 we await the prime ministerial debate between Najib and Anwar. Are you ready?" Madzlee asked.

To this, the audience answered, "We are ready!" with much of the enthusiasm observed from the side where Rafizi's supporters were seated.

Maszlee then proposed that the host for the night - Malay daily Sinar Harian - plays host again, while he moderates what would be an epic debate, if it goes through.

Spontaneous proposal

Speaking to reporters later, Sinar Harian managing editor Husamuddin Yaacub said Maszlee's proposal was "spontaneous" but the newspaper is ready to host any event that sees "a debate of minds".

"Sinar Harian will be a platform for anyone to (engage) in a gentlemanly manner," Husamuddin said.

Dr Maszlee Malik (1)Piping in, Maszlee (right), a Universiti Islam Antarabangsa lecturer, said he had proposed it as he believes "this is what the rakyat wants".

Rafizi said he had, after his first debate with Khairy in London, asked him to request Najib to accept Anwar's challenge to a debate.

"I have relayed the message to the PM and he said he will consider it. I have done my duty," Khairy told reporters.

Last year, Anwar, a former deputy premier, had challenged Najib to a debate on the economy but the latter brushed it off, saying that the now PKR de facto leader will come down with a fever if it ever happens.

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