

Najib's supporters upset at Dr M's 'hijack'

MalaysiaKini.com

June 5, 2015

By Geraldine Tong

Dr Mahathir Mohamad may have received a hero's reception at the 1MDB dialogue after the controversial failure of chief guest Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to turn up - but not all present were happy about the former prime minister 'hijacking' the event.

Though the event was titled 'Nothing to Hide: PM's dialogue with NGOs', the main star there was Mahathir who used it to criticise Najib.

"This is an event focusing on the PM, and to hear someone else speak was a little disappointing," an attendee from NGO Generasi Muda Klang, Siti Hajar, said.

The event was subsequently cancelled on the order of Inspector-General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar, who cited security concerns, despite more than 2,000 people already present at the venue, including Mahathir.

Since Najib did not show up, Mahathir took the stage and gave a speech.

However, he was stopped in the middle of his speech, by police, who escorted Mahathir off the stage.

"We respect him (Mahathir) as our former prime minister, but he should have respected this event," Siti Hajar said.

She said that while she was sad that Najib did not show up, she understood his absence as the police ordered this for safety reasons.

'Mahathir has credibility'

Another attendee, Mohd Zahid Mahmud (photo), who came all the way from Terengganu for this event, felt similarly about the incident.

"Be professional," Zahid said in reference to the speech Mahathir made in Najib's absence.

Mahathir has many other avenues to speak his mind, and he therefore need not have used this event, Mohd Zahid said.

Nevertheless, he also expressed respect for the former prime minister and for Mahathir's efforts in helping to modernise the country.

In the end, Mohd Zahid said, the organisers should have been more careful in organising the event.

However, another person who attended the event, Syed Ja'afar Al Husaini, said Mahathir has credibility as the former head of government to make his speech at the event.

"It's not me talking. It is an ex-PM talking. So, at least the opportunity should be given for him to express himself, and we must have the right to listen," Syed Ja'afar said.

He also does not believe that there was any security issue to be concerned about at the function.

"We were all well-dressed, professional people. There was no rowdiness in the crowd, no suspicious character. So what's the problem?" he asked.

The safety of the prime minister is the job of the police, Syed Ja'afar added, and if the police did their job of sweeping and patrolling the venue, there should not be any security concern to be worried about.

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