

'Debate Dr M, make your warrior ancestors proud'

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By RK Anand

Over a span of 24 hours, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has gone from "warrior" to being labelled a "coward" after he failed to turn up for a much anticipated dialogue dubbed 'Nothing to Hide' this morning.

Though the official reason for his absence is due to Inspector-General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar advising him not to attend because of security concerns, critics however claim he was afraid of facing Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who was waiting for more than two hours.

And now, PKR vice-president Rafizi Ramli has suggested an option for Najib to reclaim his honour. - a live debate with Mahathir on television.

Speaking to Malaysiakini, he noted how the organiser of the dialogue claimed that the prime minister was about to leave home.

"If he does not set the record straight through a live telecast debate, Najib maybe unfairly judged of cowardice for not turning up.

"A public debate can set the record right once and for all. It is good for Umno to prove that there's still some chivalry left in Umno, it is also good for the nation as leadership is made accountable to the nation through a public debate.

"If Najib refuses a public debate with Mahahir, he cannot blame the public if he is judged as being a coward in spite of his Bugis warrior-like ancestry," he said.

Security reasons cited

Rafizi said it is not uncommon nor was it the first time that security reasons were cited to avoid a public debate.

The Pandan lawmaker himself went through a similar episode in 2012 when a debate with Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin was called off because the police cited security reasons.

"Fortunately, the organiser (Sinar Harian) went ahead to organise a debate with smaller audience but telecast live to the nation.

"If a much smaller issue such as PTPTN (higher education loan fund) warranted a live telecast debate between much junior leaders, I am sure a debate on national leadership and the biggest national scandal such as 1MDB and PM's handling of 1MDB deserves a live telecast national debate between Mahathir and Najib," he added.

Yesterday, Najib told some 10,000 supporters in Sarawak that his detractors should not underestimate him and that the blood of warriors courses through his veins.

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