

'PM's aide sabotaged Najib-Dr M dialogue'

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The Umno-linked NGO which organised the 'Nothing2Hide' dialogue on 1MDB for Najib Abdul Razak has blamed the prime minister's aide for the no-show that has turned into a major embarrassment for the prime minister.

Malaysian Volunteer Lawyers Association (Sukaguam) chairperson Khairul Anwar Rahmat said today the aide had prevented Najib from attending the event so as to prevent him from crossing paths with former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is the prime minister's fiercest critic.

"When Najib was on the way to the venue and was advised by the inspector-general of police about the situation at PWTC, the organiser still believed that Najib should attend to prove he is big-hearted and was ready to meet with Mahathir and speak on any matter.

"We were convinced that even if the programme were to be postponed on police advice, the meeting between Najib and Mahathir should still go on in a private room to prove the start of a new chapter and to calm down their respective supporters.

"Unfortunately, the aide worked to block the prime minister's attendance, conveyed inaccurate information, and made the situation worst by exaggerating the matter to the prime minister that he would supposedly be mocked if he turned up at PWTC," he said.

Khairul, who is also Johor Umno deputy youth chief, said there was never a security concern if the duo were to meet in a private room and Najib should not have been prevented from coming.

Najib's no-show turned into a major embarrassment as he was seen as 'chickening out' and this was made worse when Mahathir, who was only there as a guest, took over the stage in the prime minister's absence.

Mahathir proceeded to criticise Najib in his speech but which lasted less than 10 minutes as police blocked him from continuing, a scene captured by the media and has since gone viral on the Internet.

"Therefore, it is true when it is said that those who sully Najib's image are not outsiders but those from among his own people," said Khairul.

'Najib accepts our explanation'

He said the if the meeting had happened and photographs of Najib and Mahathir having coffee were circulated, it would have created a 'feel good' factor even if the dialogue did not go on.

"But there are some quarters that don't want to see a change in the political landscape and didn't want our plan yesterday to succeed as the continued battle between Najib and Mahathir would benefit them," he said.

Prior to the event, Khairul said the organiser had already met with Najib's aides and had prepared for various scenarios including the one if Mahathir were to attend.

"We believe the situation would not have turned out as such if our original agenda was not disturbed too much by the aide and his associates," he said.

As such, Khairul said it was unfair for Sukaguan and other NGOs involved in organising the event to be made scapegoats for the resulting fiasco.

Khairul added he had met Najib yesterday evening to explain the situation.

"From the prime minister's face, he appears to have taken it well and understood what I wanted to convey.

"But I hope he will take stern action against the individual responsible as well as his associates," he said.

Khairul also warned the unnamed aide against turning Sukaguan into a scapegoat, saying that he was prepared to expose this person together with evidence.

He also clarified Sukaguan's claim that Mahathir was not invited, stating that the former premier was only supposed to be present as a guest and not a speaker.