

PM wasn't frightened of dialogue, prince told

MalaysiaKini.com

Jun 11, 2015

By Kow Gah Chie

There has been pin-drop silence concerning Johor Crown Prince Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim's royal swipe at Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak over his absence at the much anticipated 'Nothing to Hide' dialogue session last week.

However, Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Deputy Minister Tajuddin Abdul Rahman has now come out to defend his boss.

Speaking to Malaysiakini, he said while the prince is entitled to his opinion, Tunku Ismail must also look into the facts surrounding the incident.

"He must look into whether it was the fault of the prime minister, the organiser or those associated with the organiser, including the prime minister's officers?" he said.

It wasn't Najib's fault

Tajuddin (photo), who is also an Umno supreme council member, stressed that Najib should not be blamed.

"It wasn't Najib's fault. If the event was organised properly, the premier would have come, I am confident of that," he added.

After the botched event, Tunku Ismail posted on Facebook that it was obvious the prime minister would not attend.

"How can you have a dialogue called 'Nothing2Hide' featuring a person who has everything to hide? Obviously he won't show up," read the bilingual post, which went viral.

Quizzed on the crown prince alluding that Najib had something to conceal, Tajuddin disagreed with this.

"Najib made it known he was prepared to meet the crowd to speak openly on 1MDB. If he has something to hide, why must he agree (to attend) in the first place?" he asked.

"Najib's no-show doesn't mean he has something to hide, (we) cannot make that conclusion," he said.

Subject of ridicule

Describing Najib as a courageous person, Tajuddin said the prime minister was forced to skip the dialogue because of security concerns.

The prime minister became the subject of ridicule as detractors accused him of not attending because he was afraid of confronting his topmost critic, former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The dialogue was held a day after Najib's fiery speech in Sarawak, where he described himself as a warrior and warned his foes not to underestimate him.

The event's organiser Khairul Anwar Rahmat, who is also Johor Umno Deputy Youth Chief, when contacted by Malaysiakini, declined to comment on the matter.

"My lawyer has advised me not to say anything," he said.

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