

'Let Dr M blabber on and on, his views don't matter'

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By Kow Gah Chie

Dr Mahathir Mohamad can hurl criticisms at Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak "every minute, hour and day" but his views are not important, said Culture and Tourism Minister Mohd Nazri Aziz.

Nazri said this in response to the former prime minister's call to Najib to resign, and resume as prime minister after being cleared of any wrongdoing with regard to 1MDB.

"This is a free state. We can't jail him, we can't stop him from talking," Nazri told Malaysiakini.

"Now we know that his intention was not to defend Umno but to tarnish Najib's image and bring him down. Let him do, lah.

"What can we do? We cannot stop him from speaking so let's see who cares?" he said.

However, he said, since Mahathir's views were not important, there was no reason for Najib to step down.

Furthermore, Nazri said, the prime minister has done nothing wrong.

"A leader may need to take leave when he is being investigated or charged in court," he added.

Mahathir's advice for Najib was wrong, he said.

"If Mahathir wants to bring Najib down, the right thing for him to do was to challenge Najib in Umno election," he noted.

'Najib is still young'

When asked if Najib's image has been tarnished and things might turn out like former Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud (photo) who had to step down because of negative perception of him, Nazri disagreed.

"No, he was like Mahathir. Mahathir was old; he decided not to go for party election (and stepped down as premier). Taib is very old already and decided to retire. Najib is still young," he said.

According to Nazri, only the Umno election and general election can determine if Mahathir has been successful in discrediting Najib.

The Padang Rengas MP said he does not think Najib would step down like former premier Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, following the continuous attack from Mahathir after general elections in 2008.

He denied that Najib has become a liability to BN and Umno, as the prime minister still enjoys strong support from Umno grassroots.

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