

## **Nazri happy Dr M now supports free speech**

**MalaysiaKini.com**

**Jun 14, 2015**

**By Radzi Razak**

Tourism and Culture Minister Nazri Abdul Aziz said he is pleased with former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad's U-turn on freedom of speech as a right for all Malaysians.

"I am happy because as of late, he (Mahathir) can talk about freedom of speech. When he was prime minister, he did not care at all about freedom of speech," Nazri told Malaysiakini in an exclusive interview yesterday.

Commenting on Mahathir backing Johor crown prince Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim for airing his view on Prime Minister Najib Razak's no-show at a dialogue on 1MDB, Nazri said the royals should not meddle in politics because Malaysia adheres to the constitutional monarchy system that puts the royals above politics.

"This is a convention in our parliamentary democracy so the royals should not interfere with politics,"

Yesterday, Mahathir, responding to Nazri's remark to Tunku Ismail to stay out of politics, said the crown prince has the same right to free speech as everyone else under the law.

The crown prince had said the people should not be blamed for losing confidence and trust in Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak after he failed to show up for the "Nothing2Hide" forum on June 5.

### **Dr M's contradictions**

Nazri, who is a lawyer, said he was defending the royals and would like to enlighten Mahathir of the finer points of law in a parliamentary democracy.

"I did not say that Tunku Ismail should not speak but in our system, the royalty is above politics," he said.

Nazri said perhaps Mahathir voiced support for Tunku Ismail to divert attention from a claim he made at a talk yesterday in Kuala Lumpur.

The former premier had claimed that the late sultan of Johor, Sultan Iskandar Sultan Ismail, who was the Yang di Pertuan Agong then, was the person behind the sacking of former lord president of the Supreme Court Salleh Abas in 1988.

"Maybe Mahathir wanted to 'cover' up saying the grandfather did this. How can he be backing Tunku Ismail (above) but at the same time, complain about the grandfather?"

Mahathir had said that Sultan Iskandar, Tunku Ismail's grandfather, had an axe to grind

with Salleh because the latter had complained that the Agong was "making too much noise and disturbing his home", and copied the letter to all the sultans.

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