

Nazri stays defiant, says he only defended PM

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By Radzi Razak

Embattled Culture and Tourism Minister Nazri Abdul Aziz is staying defiant against criticism levelled at him for 'whacking' the Johor crown prince, saying the prince made allegations about wrongdoings by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

"I would understand if the prince said 'I am saddened because he (Najib) was absent'. Then I can accept it. That is not meddling in politics.

"But he (the Johor crown prince) said, 'Obviously, he (Najib) won't show up at Nothing to Hide, because he has everything to hide.'

"That is judgmental. It means that Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim of Johor has already judged that the PM is wrong. That is what's wrong with it," Nazri (photo) told Malaysiakini yesterday.

Nazri said what Tunku Ismail said was very different from the public support given by the Sultan of Pahang to Najib, as it was a custom for the royalty to endorse leaders elected by the people according to the constitutional monarch system.

"That is not meddling into politics as any prime minister or menteri besar has to secure support from the royalty. Otherwise, he or she cannot be the prime minister or a state leader, or anything," he said.

Sultan Ahmad Shah of Pahang (photo) on April 16 told his subjects to support the embattled prime minister to maintain peace and prosperity in the country.

"Najib is a hardworking leader and I am very proud of him. Let us all pray that he remains in the leadership position.

"The rakyat must support him. Don't criticise without knowing the real issue," Bernama reported the ruler as saying in Indera Mahkota.

Tunku Ismail yesterday defended his right to comment on national issues, and in a response to Nazri told off the minister that he is "not a God from the heavens who lords above everybody".

Nazri, in his response to this, said he was commenting on the basis of the "royalty being above politics" doctrine, which has been in practice for more than five decades since independence.

"My God is Allah. I am a Muslim. I never ever said that I am God," he said.

Nazri also said he understood why Johor exco member Zulkurnain Kamisan, who released a statement calling him an "outsider" who was being "insolent" towards the Johor royal family.

The Padang Rengas MP said he only responded to defend the embattled Umno president from unsubstantial criticism and slander.

"Tell him (Zulkurnain, photo) that my statement is to defend the Umno president. So what's not Umno about it? However, I understand he had to release the statement as he is from that state," Nazri said.

Nazri is now facing a police investigation under Section 505 of the Penal Code, related to statements that can lead to public mischief. Conviction under this section carries a maximum jail term of two years, a fine, or both.

Berita Harian reported on Sunday that 46 Indian-based NGOs in Johor have lodged a police report against Nazri for his statement that Tunku Ismail would be "whacked" for making political statements.

The report was lodged by T Katirber, on behalf of the 46 groups, at the Johor Bahru Central police station.

Nazri said the police have yet to record his statement and that he would fully cooperate with the investigations

"I need to adhere to the process of the law and this time, the police need to investigate," he said.

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