

Nazri following Dr M's 'one captain' advice

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EXCLUSIVE In the quest to defend his boss, Nazri Abdul Aziz has come out with guns blazing at former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad and even Johor crown prince Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim.

However, the tourism and culture minister has revealed he is merely following Mahathir's advice.

In an exclusive interview with Malaysiakini, Nazri said when he was an Umno Youth leader, Mahathir had told him "there is only one captain on a ship".

This was during the 1987 battle for the Umno presidency.

However, Nazri said he was severely criticised when he defended former premier Abdullah Ahmad Badawi against Mahathir.

"I was vilified and scolded by Umno because they said I was kurang ajar, I was disrespectful.

"Back then, he (Mahathir) told us all when Tengku Razaleigh (Hamzah) was attacking him that on a ship, there is only one captain.

"So I'm just following his advice. So I defended Pak Lah (Abdullah) as advised by Mahathir. What did I do wrong?" he asked.

Whole of Umno fighting Mahathir now

According to Nazri, the situation is different now, where the whole of Umno is fighting with Mahathir.

"I just watch from the sidelines. Because that is his free speech. I attacked him once, I was told to stop. When he criticises (now), I keep quiet because that is his free speech," he said.

In reality, Nazri has been far from quiet on the current spat between Mahathir and Najib.

On the contrary, he has been one of the most vocal ministers in defending the prime minister against Mahathir (photo) to the extent of dismissing the latter's views as unimportant, and warning the Johor prince not to meddle in politics or risk being 'whacked'.

However, Nazri conceded that Mahathir's criticisms do have an impact.

Although the 1MDB issue was first raised by the opposition, he said, the people were taken in when Mahathir harped on it.

"Certainly it added pressure because Mahathir was our PM for 22 years, so he has a firm credibility. But we can't sit down and let him do this, we need to work harder," he said.

On the same note, Nazri said people should not treat the former premier's accusations as the gospel truth.

Stop speculating on Muhyiddin, Shafie

The minister also urged the media to stop speculating that Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin and Umno vice-president Shafie Apdal are working against the prime minister.

He said it is wrong to conclude that Najib was now being attacked by his deputy when Muhyiddin merely expressed concern.

Nazri was referring to the leaked video of Muhyiddin telling Umno members at a closed-door meeting that he wanted 1MDB directors sacked and investigated.

"That is his (Muhyiddin) opinion. This is the problem with you media. You impose on us politicians (the rule) to stand up and be honest, so some of us stand up but you don't agree.

"You want us to be honest but the moment we do it, you conclude that we are against Najib.

"Muhyiddin is concerned, I am concerned, Shafie is concerned. We are different individuals, we have different styles," he added.

On the personal front, Nazri, who joined Umno in 1976, said he would not contest in the next general election.

The 61-year-old minister said he would retire before the 14th general election to "relax", pay little heed to politics and spend much of his time abroad.

"This is my last term as MP and minister. I will not contest in the next general election. I have been in politics for 40 years and a minister since 1999. For me, that is enough.

"I love to read, I will read a lot after stepping down. I will travel around the world as well," he added.