

Nazri: I will shield gov't, even from Mahathir
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Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz has picked a public spat with Utusan Malaysia columnist under the pen name 'Awang Selamat', as he defended his criticism of former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

parliament gobind singh ban over nazri mistake 251108 04Reacting to accusations that he is "anti-Dr Mahathir" and that he had been biadap (uncouth) towards a statesman who has done much for the country, Nazri said in an open letter to Utusan that his stand is to the contrary.

So far, said Nazri, Mahathir has been the best prime minister he has ever served. But as an ex-premier, he said Mahathir leaves much to be desired.

Nazri (left) claimed he has been consistent in his defence of the government against its critics - even if these now include Mahathir.

"Awang should get out of his time warp and face the fact that I am now in the government ... It is Tun Mahathir who is criticising the government and not the other way round.

"...I will defend the government, just as I did in the past when Tun Mahathir and (then) Tun Abdullah (Ahmad Badawi) was the prime minister."

Nazri reiterated his challenge to the columnist to come clean on where his loyalty lies, given the priorities Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has placed on an inclusive 1Malaysia.

NONENONE"I want Awang to know that I am always sure who my boss is. It is not (DAP leader Lim) Kit Siang or (Opposition Leader) Anwar (Ibrahim), because they are not the prime minister of Malaysia, the chairperson of BN or president of Umno.

"I am not too sure Awang knows who his boss is because he undermines the 1Malaysia policy of the prime minister and promotes the narrow racism of (Perkasa chief) Ibrahim Ali, who is not even an Umno member."

Nazri said even school children know that his agenda is to win the next general election and for Najib to remain as prime minister.

"I do hope that Awang also has the same agenda, unless of course his boss is somebody else."

Questioning the column for criticising his "civil" treatment of opposition leaders, Nazri said such conduct is the right thing to do in a democracy since "they are also elected by the people".

"Of course, Awang is caught in the time warp of the days where government MPs did not only not engage them, but hated and disliked them in all circumstances.

malaysia parliament parlimen"Awang will never understand this because he is not a MP, put in the House by the voice of the people. Anyway, did Awang ever think of how five PKR MPs could become Independents, if not for the civility shown by me to them as parliamentary

affairs minister?

"The number of crossovers to the Independent caucus has exceeded the single MP from Pasir Mas, this so-called hero for the Malays who Awang idolises. Incidentally, Umno has never asked or needed for Ibrahim to help us. Any association with him will only cause us to lose votes."

'Malaysian first'

Turning his sights on claims that he is pandering to the Chinese, Nazri pointed out that Mahathir - who was reported to have said he didn't need Chinese votes - has realised why he lost in the 90 percent Malay-majority seat of Kota Setar Selatan in 1969 to PAS' Yusof Rawa.

"There is a lesson to be learned from this," said Nazri.

Driving home his point, Nazri said Awang has never contested in an election and, furthermore, hides behind the anonymity of a pseudonym of a column in the Malay-language daily, which is owned by Umno but which has highlighted the Perkasa cause.

"Politicians like me who have stood for four general elections and won, have to be very careful in what we say and not be reckless like Awang. We need to muster all the votes regardless of race and we do not stay in the comfort zone as Awang does.

"He (Awang) can write and say anything irresponsibly and recklessly, knowing that he will never be punished by voters. I advise Awang to stick to what he does and knows best and not try to meddle in national politics, of which he has shallow knowledge and zero experience."

As a parting shot, Nazri also challenged detractors to question his identity and priorities as a citizen.

"And yes I am a Malaysian first and Malay next. Does any bigot have a problem with that?"

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