

Why PM's interfaith dialogue method is different
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The government has given its assurance that there are no double standard practices in inter-religious and cultural dialogues.

"PM promotes the same message locally and in the international arena, that is to increase understanding among different religions and cultures," said Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz.

"However, context of a dialogue and the reasons it is held in the international level is different from the reason it is held in Malaysia," he said.

"That is the reason why dialogue methods suggested by PM differ in Malaysia and other countries."

He was responding Chow Kon Yeow's (DAP-Tanjong) who asked the PM to state the reason for the 'double standard' (talam dua muka) pertaining to inter-religious and cultural dialogues by promoting such dialogues in the international arena and taking a different stand in the country.

Nazri also explained that in the international level, dialogues are needed to resolve conflicts among different countries, whereas, in Malaysia the dialogues are needed to increase understanding among different races in the country.

"PM and the Cabinet have discussed and we believe that a closed dialogue is the best way of doing it, instead of having an open debate via the media," said Nazri.

"A closed dialogue is not necessarily less effective compared to one that is openly held," he added.

Malays do not want dialogue

He stressed that is inappropriate to liken PM to a talam dua muka as it shows disrespect to the country's leader.

Nazri also explained to Chow that religious sensitivity in the country prevents the government from holding a dialogue.

"Malays make the majority race in Malaysia and they openly oppose a dialogue. We cannot do anything if they don't want to participate in the dialogue," he said.

On that note, Baharum Mohamad (BN-Sekijang) said that religion should not be discussed openly, as it will result in social unrest.

"Also, I don't agree with Chow who likened PM to a talam dua muka. As a Muslim, his statement hurt me. I would like to request that the question be withdrawn so that we don't have to discuss this (religion) in the House," he said.

Agreeing with Baharum, Nazri said: "Baharum is just one example of a Malay MP who does not want a dialogue. We have many more MPs including those from the opposition party who are

of the same opinion."

"That is why I said this (religion) is a sensitive issue, especially when we discuss it openly in the public," he said, adding that he hopes the opposition will be more careful with their questions in the future.

"We (government) accepted this question because we exercise democracy."

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