

Mahathir a 'racist', says Nazri
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Pathmawathy

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz has branded former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad a 'racist' for saying that there was no need to revamp the National Civics Bureau (BTN) training modules.

"I know Dr Mahathir commented on patriotism and all that, yes, I agree on patriotism but not only for the Malays. It's for all.

"You must remember that during his time when he was the prime minister, he was talking about (how) we must all think as Malaysians [...] now that he's not (the) prime minister, you read his blog, it's bloody racist.

"I don't like that. You must be a Malaysian whether you are a minister or not. You must walk your talk.

"Don't just (say things) when you were prime minister (and) you wanted everyone to support you. You are Malaysian but the moment you are no longer the prime minister, it's (okay to) only talk about the Malays. I cannot accept his comment," blasted Nazri (*above*).

Despite an ongoing furore that the BTN training modules promoted a racist agenda, *Bernama* reported that Mahathir had said that the bureau's curriculum had helped foster unity as the courses conducted were attended by Malaysians of all races.

BTN came into scrutiny when Pakatan Rakyat-ruled Selangor recently banned state civil servants and students of higher educational institutions in the state from attending BTN programmes.

'What is their problem?'

Selangor claimed that the courses were an indoctrination process by the Barisan Nasional government aimed at brainwashing Malaysians to hate opposition parties besides brewing racial hatred centring on 'Ketuanan Melayu' (Malay supremacy).

Penang has also followed suit in banning BTN courses in the state. Following the move by the two states, Nazri said that BTN training modules would be revamped to better reflect the '1Malaysia' concept introduced by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

"You talk about patriotism and love for the country. Patriotism is for all Malaysians regardless of race. Therefore, the money spent on BTN to have courses must reflect the '1Malaysia' slogan by the prime minister," Nazri told reporters in Parliament today.

BTN modules, he added, should be crafted in a way to instil patriotism not just among the Malays or bumiputera but in all races.

"If they have a problem with that, I want to know what is their problem. Do they want to say that Malaysia belongs only to the Malays and the government is only a Malay government? Should only the Malays be given the spirit of patriotism?

"Other races are not patriotic about their country? So I want them to point out to me where is it that I have gone wrong If I disagree with the past syllabus," he demanded.

Moreover, Nazri, who is Padang Renggas MP, reminded his critics not be in denial of BTN's past syllabus.

Nazri did not deny that the programmes encouraged antagonism towards the other races. "You want me to lie? You (will) make people laugh. I mean there are people who attended the courses who came out very angry.

"There were many instances when words like 'Ketuanan Melayu' (were uttered and it) is ridiculous. So I want them to tell me where did I go wrong in not supporting the revamping of the BTN syllabus. Tell me where I went wrong?

'Irresponsible people within BTN'

Meanwhile, after remaining mum over recent upheaval regarding the National Civics Bureau (or Biro Tatanegara, BTN) Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department SK Devamany today welcomed the revamp.

Devamany, who is also MIC vice-president, told reporters at the Parliament lobby that BTN must play a role in instilling 'nationalism for the entire nation'.

"If the modules are detrimental to nation-building and are against the constitution and Rukunegara and the spirit of Malaysia, it definitely has to be reviewed," he said.

"If there are elements within BTN which can be detrimental to nation-building where sensitive issues are brought up, I think they have to be seriously reprimanded," he said.

Devamany (*left*) said that he had brought up the issue of BTN in a meeting with the chief secretary of government last year as he had received complains that sensitive issues were raised.

"If it was allowed to go one, it will create (more) hatred and create further gaps between the relationship and harmonisation of the races in this country," he said.

The Cameron Highlands BN MP echoed the concept of a '1Malaysia' saying peace and harmony needed to be nurtured.

"Nationalism goes beyond race [...] it is the love for the nation and we all are born here. We have the spirit for the nation and that should be the 'sanctum sanctorum' for civics-related programmes.

"It could be also some irresponsible people within BTN [...] the trainers (for instance) who have taken the process in their own hands. So it is the duty of BTN's management to check if such abuses are going on and rectify them accordingly," he added.