

Mahathir - 'Father of all racism'
Malaysiakini.com
Dec 9, 2009
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Prior to his retirement in 2003, the former premier, who ruled the nation for more than two decades, was heralded as the 'Father of Modernisation'.

Now he has been conferred with a new title by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz.

According to him, the 84-year-old medical doctor turned politician is the 'father of all racism'.

Nazri today continued with his verbal tirade against the former Umno president over the controversy surrounding the National Civics Bureau (BTN) programme.

While the minister wanted a revamp of the curriculum, Mahathir defended it, leading Nazri to accuse him of doublespeak and racism.

Yesterday, Mahathir retaliated by challenging Nazri to resign from Umno, which the former president described as a racist organisation.

Dissatisfied, Nazri fired a fresh round of attacks in the Parliament lobby this afternoon.

"He says I'm in a racist party so he confirms what I said about him. If he says I'm in a racist party, then he's the father of all racism... he was president of Umno for 22 years.

"As ex-prime minister, he should give better suggestions. I feel sorry for him but I will continue (hitting out). Please do not think (I'm) being disrespectful but if he's free to comment about us, then he must accept the fact that he is open to criticism also," he said.

'I learnt the craft from him'

Reiterating that he meant no disrespect, Nazri said Mahathir's supporters must understand that it is about democracy and free speech.

On a sarcastic note, the minister pointed out that he is merely employing the skills he had learnt from the former premier.

"In 1969, when he criticised Tunku Abdul Rahman, (was) that not disrespectful? He taught me (the art). If he does it, it is ok, but if we do it then it is disrespectful? He is my teacher," he said.

Nazri said he will also not give Mahathir the "pleasure" of seeing him resign from Umno.

"I'm not stupid to fall into his trap," the minister said, adding that he was puzzled as to why Mahathir disliked him when it was the latter who appointed him.

"I didn't force him, I didn't put a gun to his head. He knows I'm a good minister and I have been a minister for three terms. Each time a new prime minister takes over, there are rumours that I will be dropped. I have been a minister for 10 years. I only serve the rakyat," he added.

'The public must know'

On Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's statement that labelling Mahathir a racist was extreme, Nazri said he was entitled to his opinion.

"That is his (Muhyiddin's) view but he is in Japan and the issue is happening here," he said.

Muhyiddin, who is on a special trade and investment mission to Japan, had cautioned Barisan Nasional leaders against locking horns with each other in the open.

Furthermore, Nazri said with modern technology there was no way to conceal information from the public.

"Even if you fart, people will know. So what is wrong in fighting in the open? The public has the right to know views of both sides so why must you hide? If you are faint-hearted, then don't come into politics.

"I'm not faint-hearted. I take up any fight. If I'm right, I'm right but if I'm wrong, I will say sorry. But in this case, I'm right," he asserted.

Nazri said leaders who supported the current BTN curriculum should stop being in denial and support a revamp that will reflect the '1Malaysia' concept.

"We are not *katak di bawah tempurung*, we are *katak bawah glass* (we are not frogs under coconut shells but frogs under a glass). We can see what is happening and yet we still want to deny it," he said.

"The old BTN did not involve (Prime Minister) Najib (Abdul Razak), now we have 1Malaysia so obviously the curriculum should reflect that," he added.

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