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Of civility and the Last Samurai

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The current hostilities between Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz are a continuation of their clash at the height of the Mahathir-Abdullah fallout

UMNO politicians often claim that Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz almost became Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's son-in-law because he reportedly dated one of the former Prime Minister's daughters in the 1970s.

But they like to tease Nazri that he is now more of an "outlaw" in the eyes of Dr Mahathir.

The war of words between the country's most eminent statesman and the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department reached a new level this week.

Even Members of Parliament, no strangers to strong language and outrageous behaviour, were taken aback at the outburst from Nazri.

The argument between the two men was ostensibly over the controversial Biro Tata Negara (BTN) programme but has since snowballed into a clash of personalities and egos.

Actually, this is not the first time Nazri has used the term in Parliament.

At a parliamentary sitting in June 2005, he apparently used the terms "racist," "bloody racist" and "perkau-man" a total of 28 times. The difference is that he had then directed it at the Opposition bench.

The video of him single-handedly taking on the Opposition can still be viewed on YouTube.

It was not exactly parliamentary behaviour but you have to give it to Nazri, he is truly one of those *jantan* (macho) politicians. Nothing seems to scare him, not even Dr



ANALYSIS

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Mahathir.

But many believe Nazri may have bitten off more than he can chew this time.

"What's happened to Nazri? Why does he need to do that?" asked Umno Youth politician Tun Faizal Ismail.

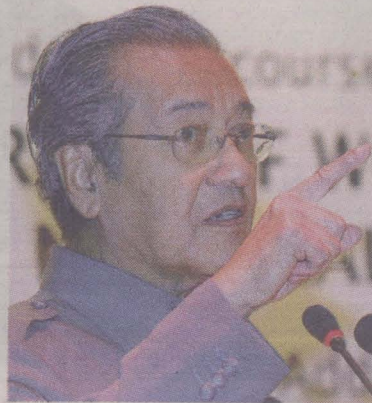
Dr Mahathir has an army of admirers out there and they are very unhappy about Nazri's behaviour towards their super-hero. Some of them include very vocal bloggers and this group is going for Nazri's jugular in no uncertain terms.

"Rockybru" (newspaper editor Ahirudin Attan) said Nazri, if not stopped, could cause a political crisis. Rocky, as he is known, is the "big bro" of the pro-Mahathir bloggers, the most strategic among them and his voice carries weight.

Die-hard Mahathirist and blogger, Bigdogdotcom (Zakhir Mohamad), has already called for Nazri to be out of the Cabinet and Umno.

Others have resorted to calling him names from "balaci" (henchman) to "caveman."

It is a war zone out there but Nazri



No love lost: Dr Mahathir's admirers are unhappy about Nazri's behaviour towards their super-hero

is unfazed.

He said Dr Mahathir's current stand on the bureau issue is contrary to what he had advocated when he was Prime Minister.

"I have always been 100% loyal to the Prime Minister of the day. I have served Tun Mahathir, I defended him against my good friend Anwar (Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim).

"He was like our *mahaguru* but he is now going against what he has preached. That's why I am angry," said Nazri.

The acrimony between them seems to be a continuation of their clash back in 2006 when Nazri took it upon himself to defend Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who was



under attack from Dr Mahathir.

He was the most vocal of the gang who went for Dr Mahathir and some even said his ministerial portfolio then was to handle Dr Mahathir.

At the height of the Mahathir-Abdullah fallout, Nazri challenged the elder man to resign from Umno if he was *jantan*. Dr Mahathir was infuriated but he did eventually quit Umno in 2008.

In one of those ironies of life, Dr Mahathir is now telling Nazri to resign from Umno if he thinks Umno is a racist party.

An eye for an eye, as they say.

The older man has yet to forgive him for being a hatchet man for

Abdullah.

Nazri comes from a well-known Umno family in Perak but got all his major breaks in politics from Dr Mahathir, from his parliamentary seat to a Cabinet post, and that is a lot for any politician.

"I have a feeling it is going to turn out worse for Nazri. Good fighters must know where to draw the line. It's not that you cannot criticise Tun Mahathir but there must be decorum. Nazri has some valid points but the language he used, the way he said it, all of it became an issue for Tun Mahathir's supporters," said former ministerial aide Juhaidi Yean Abdullah.

Public opinion still very much favours Dr Mahathir, warts and all. Moreover, his status and prestige under Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak's administration is quite different from that during Abdullah's period.

The mighty *Utusan Malaysia* has also come out to defend Dr Mahathir's stand on the issue, although as Nazri pointed out, the vernacular Chinese papers are taking his side.

Some of Nazri's parliamentary colleagues see him as the Last Samurai, the last of the fearless politicians.

But will this samurai have to eventually commit political harakiri?