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Najib-Anwar debate should be way forward

KUALA LUMPUR: PAS Youth information chief Riduan Mohd Nor has welcomed suggestions for a debate between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and parliamentary Opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"Clearly the two leaders are waiting for the two leaders to face off on the same platform to see what they can come up with," he said.

In a statement Jan 26, Riduan said political debate should be the new political direction that the two leaders should explore.

"With the lopsided media coverage plus the propaganda drive to smear the image of Opposition leaders in the country going on for far too long, the debate would be required (for the public) to gauge the stand of both leaders," he said.

"The people have been exposed to one-sided information for far too long," he said.

Riduan said the situation now had changed and that the public was more open to evaluate information.

"They would need a medium to sharpen their observation on the country's political development and open debate is a way forward for everybody," he said.

Historical milestone

He said with Najib's alleged soaring popularity, the premier should not miss the chance to cement his popularity further.

"The debate might go down as a historical milestone because a government leader is willing to sit



Riduan Mohd Nor

at the same table to debate with the (Parliamentary) Opposition leader," he said.

Riduan also hoped that the event would be televised live for

the public.

"The debate is important as an effort to develop the country and the future of the nation," he said.

The Merdeka Centre had said that many Malay professionals wanted to see Najib and Anwar debate on policy issues.

"There appears to be a change in what the people want. They want a new culture of debate rather than smear campaigns," Merdeka Center director Ibrahim Sufflan told a Malay-language daily recently.

Debate over national policies

The centre's findings come just 10 days after Anwar challenged Najib to a public

debate over national policies during his winding-up speech at the Pakatan Rakyat (Pakatan) convention in Alor Star.

The Parti Keadilan Rakyat (KeADILan) de facto leader had said that an open debate would let voters decide for themselves if the Opposition pact's plans for Malaysia had merit.

The ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition has criticized PR's alternative policies as populist and irresponsible.

It was the third such challenge issued by Anwar to Najib, who has so far declined to go toe-to-toe with the former deputy prime minister.

Najib, who is Umno president, previously demurred by saying that political parties were more important than individuals in Malaysia's parliamentary democracy.- ES