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Nazri-Tun M debate: ALTERNATIVES?

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If there is no place for the debate in Malaysia, we can do it in Antarctica

 - Datuk Seri Nazri Abdul Aziz

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KUALA LUMPUR: Tourism and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Nazri Abdul Aziz yesterday said the debate

between Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and him could be held at the police training auditorium in Cheras, or in Antarctica.

 He said the debate could be held in these places if the police are concerned that a discourse between

him and the former premier would disrupt peace and public order.

 "I was told the police auditorium is big. Maybe we can ask the police to organise this event," he said in the Parliament media room yesterday.

 "If there is no place for the debate

in Malaysia, we can do it in Antarctica," said an obviously frustrated Nazri.

 "There are lots of penguins there. They don't understand Malay or

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I can't help it if the police are not intellectual, says Nazri

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English, so there won't be any riot," he quipped.

"This is an intellectual discourse. If the police are not intellectual, I can't help it. This (the debate) is a healthy democratic process," said Nazri, whose outburst comes after Selangor police last Saturday cancelled the permit for the showdown, a day after approving the permit for the debate to be held at Karangkrak's



headquarters in Shah Alam. This was the second time the debate was cancelled, as Perak police had refused to issue a permit when it was first scheduled to be held in Kuala Kangsar on March 25.

The debate was to be, among other things, on the iMDB issue, the

Bumiputra Malaysia Finance (BMF) scandal in the 1980s and Bank Negara Malaysia's foreign exchange losses.

Asked what could have prompted the police to bar the debate, Nazri said maybe the police regarded him as a national threat. "I cannot imagine I am a threat to the nation even though I am a minister. What if I am from the Opposition?" he asked.

"Mahathir is an old and frail man. He can't be a threat. Maybe I was the reason why the police did not allow the debate. Maybe because I look like a gangster, I don't know," he added.

Nazri said he is prepared if



there is any suggestion for the debate to be postponed and held in any new location.

"No problem. I can debate with Mahathir any time. Tell Mahathir don't run. I dedicate this song 'I will follow you' to him," he said.

However, Nazri dismissed a suggestion that the debate be held in a hotel or it be live-streamed online.

"I want the public to be around. If the police are not intellectual I can't help it, (but) the public are (intellectual).

"People are not going to have a punch-up after a debate. Maybe that's how the police are, every time there is a rally, they want a punch-up to happen."

Kumpulan Media Karangkrak, the debate's organiser, said it was clueless why a permit is needed.