

Nazri: Pakatan fled Parliament in fear of 'looking stupid'
The Malaysian Insider
November 30, 2011
By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 30 — Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Aziz mocked the opposition's Parliamentary walkout yesterday before the Peaceful Assembly Bill vote, claiming they were afraid he would "tear them to pieces" by then.

"When they heard I was going to wind up debates, they knew I would have substance in my argument.

"That's why they fled, they boycotted... I would have torn them to pieces, anything they raised, I would have made them look stupid. They were worried, they were scared," he told The Malaysian Insider last night.

Pakatan Rakyat (PR) MPs staged a walkout yesterday after their plea for the Bill's withdrawal was rejected.

Their move allowed Dewan Rakyat to pass the controversial law with just votes from the Barisan Nasional (BN) bench, pushing through six amendments revolving around the advance notice required for an assembly.

Speaker Tan Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia had allowed just three opposition MPs to debate the Bill, all of whom asked for it to be withdrawn and put before a select committee.

"This is our way of rejecting the Bill until we have a select committee," PKR's Subang MP R. Sivarasa told The Malaysian Insider as the opposition lawmakers left Parliament.

"This Bill does not protect national security, only the security of BN leaders," said PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang, who was the last PR MP allowed to speak.

Critics have said the proposed law, which bars street protests, is more repressive than those in countries like Myanmar, which has one of the world's poorest human rights records.

But Nazri (picture), the de facto law minister accused PR of "opposing for the sake of opposing", standing by the government's view that the newly proposed law "takes the right to public assembly from the hands of the police to the rakyat".

He reminded the opposition that while Article 10 of the Constitution allows for peaceful assembly without arms, it also stipulates the government's right to enact laws to protect national security and public order.

"At the end of the day, the security of the federation lies in our hands. We have to answer for any mishaps that should occur during such assemblies," he said.

Nazri poured cold water on all points of contention raised by the opposition against the Bill during debates yesterday, singling out DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng and PKR de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in his arguments.

On the advance notice requirement, Nazri said 10 days was reasonable and was not imposed for the purpose of restricting freedom.

"You give notice within 10 days and the cops must respond within five days. If they do not respond, you can proceed with the assembly.

"We need to seek notice for non-gazetted areas... For example, if you want to hold an assembly outside Anwar's house... Don't you think he has the right to say okay or not? And we need that notice period to seek his permission," he said.

Nazri stressed that while the Bill bans street demonstrations "in motion", it still allows for street gatherings, provided that the notice requirement is fulfilled and location is acceptable.

"So what are they talking about now? They have no standing," he said.

Nazri also castigated the Bar Council for staging a protest yesterday against the Bill, and called out its president Lim Chee Wee to stand for elections if he felt his views represented the people's voice.

"This is how they behave when their views are not accepted... They want to force it down our throats.

"Who elected them? No one did. How is it, that BN, elected by the people, is now made to feel as if the Bar Council has more standing than us?" he said.

Nazri then challenged Lim to register the council as a political party and stand in the coming polls.

"Otherwise, do not be too presumptuous and think that your views are shared by all. Behave like professionals," he said.

Hundreds of lawyers joined Lim in the council's "Walk for Freedom" outside the august House yesterday to mark their open defiance against a law they claim is unconstitutional.

The council also handed over copies of its proposed alternative to the government's assembly Bill to deputy minister Datuk V. K. Liew, urging the government to consider their recommendations.

The Malaysian Insider

Copyright © 2011 The Malaysian Insider

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/nazri-pakatan-fled-parliament-in-fear-of-looking-stupid/>