

Aziz Bari's suspension to facilitate investigations, says Najib
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By Melissa Chi

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 23 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak defended today Prof Dr Abdul Aziz Bari's week-long suspension, saying it was necessary in order for investigations to be carried out.

"I understand that this is not a suspension from work. It is a suspension to allow the investigation process to proceed.

"Work suspension would be based on what he had said so we don't know ... according to the UIA rector, she said they are still investigating and their purpose is to question him regarding the case," the prime minister said at a press conference here today.

Aziz Bari (picture), however, insisted yesterday that he has been suspended indefinitely and barred from entering International Islamic University of Malaysia (UIA) grounds pending an internal inquiry despite a denial from the university administration.

UIA Rector Prof Datuk Dr Zaleha Kamaruddin told reporters yesterday the constitutional law expert was "free to enter the university and associate with the faculty" during his week-long suspension for his recent statement on the Selangor Sultan.

Abdul Aziz said in a clarification issued by his lawyer Dr Zulqarnain Lukman that the show-cause letter he received from UIA on October 19 had suspended him with immediate effect without specifying the duration of the inquiry.

"Kindly take note that pending the completion of the University's investigation into the above allegation and the outcome of any inquiry which the University may wish to conduct, you shall be suspended from service on full pay with immediate effect, until further notice," the letter reads.

"Please be reminded that during the period of your suspension, you are not authorised to enter the premises of the University without the expressed written permission of the Dean, Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyah of Laws.

"You are further neither authorised to conduct any transactions on behalf of the University nor contact staff of the University or business associates of the University without the expressed written permission of the Dean, Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyah of Laws."

Abdul Aziz was suspended last Wednesday after he appeared to question remarks made by the Selangor Sultan in connection with the August raid on the Damansara Utama Methodist Church (DUMC) by the Selangor Islamic Religious Department (Jais).

Abdul Aziz's statement had caused a furore among Barisan Nasional (BN) MPs in Parliament, who urged that action be taken against the don.

Although a police report has been lodged against Abdul Aziz, the outspoken academic has decided against apologising for his remarks, insisting he had not meant to challenge the Sultan.

Hundreds of UIA students gathered at its Gombak campus yesterday to demand the lecturer's reinstatement.

Abdul Aziz's colleagues and lecturers from other universities also backed him as he repeated yesterday that he had not attacked the Selangor Sultan.

He had contended that he was fulfilling his role as an academic when he said earlier this month that the Sultan had intervened in an "unusual and inconsistent" manner on a church raid by religious authorities.

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