

**Government Backbenchers Defend Najib For Skipping 'Nothing To Hide' Dialogue
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KUALA LUMPUR, June 8 (Bernama) - The 'Nothing To Hide' dialogue which should have been attended by prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak was a hot topic in parliament as several government backbenchers offered an explanation regarding the controversy.

Datuk Seri Noh Omar (BN-Tanjong Karang) said the cancellation of the dialogue also attended by former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was fair as there was fear of provocation by certain parties.

The former minister said Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar should be commended for cancelling the dialogue as it was the best course of action to protect the dignity of the two leaders.

"It's a question of dignity, not only the dignity of the prime minister, but also the dignity of a statesman (Dr Mahathir), who should not be made a spectacle.

"Thank you for not playing into the hands of the Opposition," he said when debating the 11th Malaysia Plan (11MP) here, Monday.

The dialogue between the prime minister and non-governmental organisations (NGO) was cancelled and postponed to a later date on police orders for safety concerns.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim meanwhile said that he had explained Najib's absence at the dialogue to Dr Mahathir.

"The prime minister was ready to go on that day but skipped the event on the order of the inspector-general of police for security reasons.

"I was with Tun Mahathir in Kota Kinabalu yesterday for a PERKIM (Malaysian Muslim Welfare Organisation) event and said the same thing.

"Tun just smiled at the explanation," he said in reply to Datuk Mahfuz Omar (PAS-Pokok Sena) who claimed the prime minister was afraid of Dr Mahathir.

Mahathir is the president of PERKIM while Shahidan is the vice-president.

Tan Sri Annuar Musa (BN-Ketereh), who was among those who attended the dialogue, said the cancellation was prompted by the situation outside the hall.

The former minister said the presence of Dr Mahathir was known by the organisers and Najib, who openly accepted the presence of Dr Mahathir.

"When I entered, the hall was full and there were many people without cards (invitation) outside. The police could not control the situation.

"Due to security factors, the inspector-general of police decided to cancel the dialogue," he added.

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