

## **Kit Siang: How is debating in private premises a security threat?**

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### **DAP elder politician accuses the Najib government of “running scared” of people demanding accountability for the 1MDB affair with the prohibition of the Mahathir-Nazri debate.**

PETALING JAYA: DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang has characterised police disapproval of a debate between Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Nazri Aziz as evidence that the administration of prime minister Najib Razak is “running scared” of people demanding accountability for the 1MDB affair.

Speaking at a dinner organised by the DAP in Batu Pahat last night, he claimed that Najib has no answer to queries regarding the controversy surrounding the sovereign wealth fund.

“Forty-nine years ago on November 24, 1968, I had a six-hour ‘Great Cultural’ public debate with Professor Naguib Alatas, then representing Parti Gerakan, with a packed audience at the MARA Auditorium in Kuala Lumpur,” he said.

In contrast the debate between Mahathir and Nazri has to be aborted because of revocation of police permit for the debate.

“Are we making progress in democracy and human rights or are we regressing and going backwards in the past six decades, where a debate between a former prime minister and an incumbent cabinet minister in private premises could be regarded as a security threat and has to be banned by the police in a gross abuse of powers?” he said.

The Gelang Patah MP said those who had predicted that the Najib administration would never allow the debate had been proven right as they had read correctly “the political mood, character and quality of the Najib administration.”

“Clearly, the Najib government is running scared of the ordinary people demanding accountability for the 1MDB scandal,” he said.

“Najib has no answer to these demands and is unable to clear Malaysia of the curse, infamy and ignominy of being regarded worldwide as a global kleptocracy.”

He said this was the reason for the “farce and tragedy” of the change of venue from Padang Rengas to Shah Alam only to be blocked by the police on both occasions.

The debate was originally scheduled for March 25 when Mahathir visited Nazri's parliamentary constituency of Padang Rengas. The police rejected an application for a permit to hold the event.

The idea came about after Mahathir, who is chairman of Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM), challenged Tourism and Culture Minister Nazri to a debate on political and economic matters affecting the nation.

He specifically cited topics like 1MDB, the Bumiputra Malaysia Finance (BMF) scandal and the deposit of RM2.6 billion into Prime Minister Najib Razak's bank account.

As the organiser, Kumpulan Media Karangraf, the publisher of Sinar Harian, then proposed to hold it at its Kompleks Karangraf, Shah Alam on April 7.

Police had yesterday given approval for the event, but Karangraf managing director Hussamuddin Yaacob later said he had received a letter from Shah Alam district police chief ACP Shafien Mamat that the permit was cancelled.

Lim said he would have attended the debate as all Malaysians want to know more about the 1MDB affair.

He pointed out that eight judges in South Korea had last month unanimously decided to uphold the impeachment motion of the country's president Park Geun-hye in December. She was removed from office and arrested on charges related to abuses of power and corruption.

"This is the strength and resilience of democracy and human rights in South Korea when sixty years ago, any notion of democracy and human rights in South Korea was non-existent as it was ruled by a dictatorship," he said

He stressed that South Korea was under the dictatorship at the same time Malaysia achieved independence on August 31, 1957 with the proclamation of independence to have a "peaceful and orderly advancement as a constitutional monarchy based on parliamentary democracy".

Lim also said Malaysians wanting to know the truth about the 1MDB issues should vote for a new federal government with the platform to conduct the full investigation into the matter, he said.

Lim said although Nazri was not in the centre of any decision-making process in the 1MDB affair he cannot disclaim responsibility as he is bound under the principle of collective cabinet responsibility for government decisions and actions.

He added that he suspected former second finance minister Ahmad Husni Hanadzlah had more information about the issue than either Nazri or current second finance minister Johari Abdul Ghani, speculating that it may be the reason Husni quit his post.

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