

Irate Nazri now wants police to host debate with Mahathir

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By Adam Abu Bakar

The Umno leader wonders if it was his 'gangster' look that made the cops to cancel the event.

PETALING JAYA: A “deeply shocked” Nazri Aziz has suggested to the cops that his debate with Dr Mahathir Mohamad, which has been cancelled twice, be held at the Cheras police headquarters if he was such a threat to security.

The tourism and culture minister has taken the police cancellation of the permit for the event badly after it was initially approved by the cops to be held at Komplek Karangraf in Shah Alam.

Nazri said he was informed of the latest decision during his Indian trip when accompanying Prime Minister Najib Razak.

“I’m deeply shocked and surprised that I’ve been treated this way and I don’t know the reason for it,” he told reporters at the Parliament today.

Shah Alam police in revoking the permit to Sinar Harian publisher Karangraf cited protests from residents in the surrounding areas.

Nazri questioned the excuse from the police, saying the Karangraf complex was situated in an industrial area.

He also brushed aside suggestions that Najib was behind the police decision, saying the prime minister had recently thanked him for wanting to defend him against Mahathir’s attacks.

Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi had also expressed his support for the debate, said Nazri.

Nazri also did not think Mahathir was the reason for the cancellation, saying the former prime minister was “old and very frail and not a threat at all”.

“I think it must be me. I am the reason the police will not permit the debate. Maybe I appear like a gangster.”

He suggested that the police take over as the organiser if they were so fearful of an “intellectual discourse”.

“I am told that the auditorium at the Cheras police headquarters is very big; maybe we can hold the debate there and the police can be the organiser.”

Or, he went on sarcastically, “we could do it in London or Greenland or Antarctica, where there are only penguins, who will not be able to understand a word”.

Wherever the venue, Nazri was adamant that the debate must take place, and in public, too.

“I will wait for Mahathir’s party, perhaps they have a plan. Or, since we have asked Karangraf to organise the debate, we should leave it to them to make the arrangements.

“I will be ready when they call, anytime, any place,” he declared.

Shah Alam MP Khalid Samad, meanwhile, has also told the police to have the debate in a police station “if they are afraid”.

He said he had not received any complaints from his constituents about the debate, in which he was to have served as moderator.

“If they (the authorities) are so afraid of having the debate, then have it in their police district headquarters,” he said during a press conference at Dewan Rakyat Media Centre here today.

Police claim 18 police reports were filed by nearby residents saying the event could affect public order and safety.

Checks by FMT yesterday found there were no private residences in the immediate areas surrounding the debate venue.

The only residential units close to the Karangraf Complex in the industrial zone in Section 15 are police and fire and rescue department quarters.

The nearest housing estates are 2km away in Sections 16, 18 and 19 in Shah Alam.

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