

Nazri to Dr M: I will take you on

by **B. Suresh Ram**
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

KUALA LUMPUR: Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk Seri Nazri Abdul Azi vowed yesterday to vigorously defend the leadership of Umno and the government against attacks by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. "I don't want my PM and DPM to reply and as the Minister in the Prime

Minister's Department and from Umno I take it upon myself to reply to all these allegations," he said.

"We are going to follow him. We are not going to let him make statements while we keep quiet. People will misconstrue that he is telling the truth."

Nazri added: "The Opposition is not causing us any problems. He is causing us problems. The Opposition is down at the moment but he is giving

all the Opposition."

Speaking at a 45-minute press conference in Parliament in response to Mahathir's latest attacks at a dialogue attended by leaders of Opposition parties on Saturday, Nazri did not mince his words.

"If it is open war, we go to war-lah. I think his style is also like my style."

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Nazri challenges Dr M to resign from Umno

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Aiming a barb at Mahathir's famous speech about how *Melayu mudah lupa* (Malays easily forget), he said it was Mahathir who had now

forgotten that he himself had always urged Umno members to be loyal to their leader.

"When he was the prime minister we supported him, now we support the (current) prime minister.

"Now he is angry with us (for following) what he had said"

Nazri added that it was also unfair for Mahathir to criticise Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak for supporting Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

This was because when Mahathir was the deputy of Tun Hussein Onn, he was loyal to the country's third prime minister, Nazri said.

And Mahathir was also angry with two of his deputies Tun Musa Hitam and Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim when they turned against him and always demanded loyalty.

"Now when Najib

supports Pak Lah, he is upset," he said.

Nazri also said that it was not fair for Mahathir to drag deputy Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin, who is the son-in-law of Abdullah, into the current dispute.

"In the past people talked about nepotism in his (Mahathir) administration, but we respected him and did not raise the issue.

"I cannot accept that he is angry with one young individual and for that he is prepared to burn the party. He is not a rookie. He is a seasoned politician and he should know better."

Nazri also said he was quite surprised that Mahathir was expecting Umno to sack him and

was now working with leaders of the Opposition like PAS to attack Umno.

"I was shocked. And I think when he was president of Umno he would not have tolerated this," he said.

He challenged Mahathir to resign from Umno so that he (Nazri) can take him on fully on the issues.

"Now I am a bit hesitant (to go all out) as he is a former party president"



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- Nazri