

Nazri calls it blackmail by Dr Mahathir

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KUALA TERENGGANU: Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz described Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's remarks that he would only stop criticising the Government if it resumed the crooked bridge project as a blackmail.

"No. This is blackmail. We just can't reverse the decision just like that. Before we made whatever decision, we had given much thought to it and took the interest of the people into consideration. How can we change the decision because of one person?" he told reporters after visiting Amanah Raya Berhad's Terengganu branch here yesterday.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir said he would refrain from commenting on the Abdullah administration if

the Government revived the bridge project.

"Pak Lah has got to build the bridge. If he does that, I don't have any more comments," the former prime minister was quoted as saying to reporters after a convocation ceremony at the Multimedia University in Putrajaya.

To this, Nazri said Dr Mahathir's statement was merely an excuse for him to continue criticising the Government.

"Never mind, for me, he can go ahead. But don't let other people tell us not to reply like Umno Youth Exco member Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir. I don't understand, he said don't raise the issues about his father at the Umno general assembly, but if his father continues to level the criticisms, we have to continue replying.

"If we feel he has the right, the public and Umno members must understand, I also have the right to answer. As what Tun Dr Mahathir said, I have the right, so we don't worry. If he wants to continue (criticising), go ahead, we will continue replying..."

"And we have replied to everything, I don't understand what Mukhriz meant, I have to reply to four questions first ... we have made lengthy replies. Is he blind? Can't he read? Clarifications have been made. Is he deaf? What else does he want?"

Nazri described the different views given by Umno leaders over the issue reflected a rift in Umno.

He singled out Umno supreme council member and Rural and Regional Development Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin for

mistaking his statement.

"I didn't say that Tun Dr Mahathir wanted to wrest control of power. I just said that, I had information that Tun wanted Pak Lah's downfall.

"How can Tun say that what he did would not split the party? If the ministers themselves made conflicting remarks, what does it mean?"

Asked about ways to defuse the issue, Nazri said: "Ask Tun if he loves the party. He advised us before, love the party ... What he did can split the party."

Nazri said he would continue to defend the Government and reply to the former prime minister's criticisms for he loved the party and wanted to save it from disintegrating.

He compared the situation to the

Umno crisis in 1990 and the upheaval after the dismissal of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in 1999.

"I hold fast to the concept of one captain one vessel if we want to be safe. A lot of people don't agree with my way because they themselves don't know who their leader is, Tun (Dr Mahathir) or Pak Lah.

"Pak Lah is the leader, I have no qualms and I don't care ... if they are mad at me, let it be," he said.

Nazri said Dr Mahathir called him a henchman because he came to the former prime minister's defence before.

"But today it's for Pak Lah, we have to stand up for him," he said.

Nazri asked Umno leaders not to be hypocrites when making remarks over the issue.

"A spade is a spade. No need to