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# 'NGOs can receive foreign funds but not be made use of'

KUALA LUMPUR: It is all right for groups and non-governmental organisations to receive foreign funding but they should not be used by outsiders as mercenaries to attack the government.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz said groups that act like mercenaries are questionable as it is unknown if their criticisms against the government are genuine.

"They are just like mercenaries because they receive money but their criticisms may not be genuine.

"It may be only an act of gratification for receiving funding from certain groups overseas," Nazri said.

He was referring to civil liberties group Suara Rakyat Malaysia (Suaram), which was investigated over foreign funding.

The probe caused a public outcry, with several quarters calling it harassment and intimidation by the government.

Some quarters also argued there was nothing unusual about NGOs receiving foreign funds, adding that even the government receives international funding.

Nazri scoffed at the comments, describing the rebuttals as "very poor".

He said some NGOs such as the Malaysian AIDS Council, which has admitted receiving support from international agencies for its programmes, are fine "as it is for a good cause".

"The funding is not an issue, the issue is that you receive money from overseas and act like a mercenary to attack the government; you are being used by outsiders," he said.

On Sept 18, Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob announced a probe on Suaram and its affiliate, Suara Inisiatif Sdn Bhd.

He said the Registrar of Societies would take action against Suaram and Suara Inisiatif under the Societies Act 1966, while Bank Negara Malaysia would probe Suaram under the Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorism Financing Act 2001 for anomalies related to its accounts.

On Tuesday, Ismail told reporters the Companies Commission of Malaysia has submitted a report on Suaram and Suara Inisiatif to the Attorney-General's Chambers for further investigation.



Nazri