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Zam slams Zahid for nepotism comments

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Senator Datuk Zainuddin Maidin today criticised Umno Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi for harping on the issue of nepotism and cronyism, saying this was "dangerous" to party unity.

He said Zahid should be aware that as the Umno general assembly approaches, there would be strong pressure from abroad to jeopardise both public and Umno's unity, and Zahid could unwittingly be made an instrument.

In a Press statement, Zainuddin, who is better known as Zam, said Zahid's comments seemed to have garnered support from some Islamic student associations, while creating anxiety in Umno and doubts among the public.

Zainuddin said it would not be surprising if young students not well-versed in the nation's history were influenced by Zahid's statement.

"This reveals his immaturity. The statement by Zahid lends credence to the picture painted by the foreign media that nepotism and cronyism exist in Malaysia just like in Indonesia," Zainuddin said.

He said the foreign media viewed the New Economic Policy as having characteristics of nepotism and cronyism.

"Through the NEP, thousands of Malays have been educated and entered professional life, even holding important positions in the corporate world and the like," Zainuddin said.

He said there might not be any Malay who did not benefit from this "nepotism policy" which had raised their standing in Malaysia's plural society.

Many Malay students now in the country's institutions of higher learning were there because of the "nepotism policy".

"Zahid himself got positions in several companies due to the 'nepotism policy'. His statement does not help the nation at this critical time, but instead creates misconceptions about the leadership of the party and nation," he added.

Zainuddin said this was realised by Zahid himself when the latter said last night that there were instigators from inside and outside Umno who were placing him at loggerheads with the party leadership.

"Zahid should be aware that his statement, which uses foreign terms like nepotism and cronyism, at once creates wrong assumptions about party leadership, especially the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim," Zainuddin said.

He said this was proven by statements made by the National Association of Islamic Students Malaysia and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Students Association.

"It would be very difficult to change the public's view about his (Zahid's) leadership by any statement now.

"This reminds us of the time the nation was shocked by his action to apologise to former Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and his wild accusation about a plot to bring down the Selangor Menteri Besar (Datuk Abu Hassan Omar) which could not be proven."

(END)