

24 FEB 2001

ZAM BROUGHT DOWN USMAN'S REPUTATION, SAYS RUSTAM

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 24 (Bernama) -- Information Ministry parliamentary secretary Datuk Zainuddin Maidin brought down the reputation of Datuk Usman Awang by influencing the national literary laureate to accept a special award from the Prime Minister recently, said an opposition politician.

Parti Rakyat Malaysia vice-president Rustam A. Sani, in a statement to the latest edition of the PAS official organ, said Zainuddin did this to counter the influence of another national literary laureate, Datuk Shahnnon Ahmad, who rocked the local literary world with his novel "Shit".

"Wasnt't it Zam (Zainuddin) who influenced Usman to accept a special award presented by (Datuk Seri) Dr Mahathir Mohamad in an effort to counter Shahnnon's influence.

"In the end it was the reputation of National Laureate Usman that became the victim, including among his close friends," said Rustam.

Rustam feels veteran journalists Tan Sri A.Samad Ismail and Datuk Mazlan Nordin too lost their respect among friends for undertaking a similar task as Zainuddin, at the New Straits Times and Institute of Strategic and Internal Studies (Isis).

The PRM vice-president thinks Zainuddin's recent appointment as parliamentary secretary was to make it easier for him to carry out such tasks, but feels he would fail in this.

Rustam also thinks Zainuddin was responsible for some of the articles in Utusan Malaysia that attacked him and Parti Keadilan Nasional deputy president Dr Chandra Muzaffar.

He also disputed Zainuddin's statement that the viewership of TV3 and RTM, and sales of major newspapers in the country, had risen.

--BERNAMA

NZ SK