

Zaid slams Dr M over 'M'sia not Malay enough'
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Political leaders' worry that Malays would not be "Malay enough" means that Malaysia can never catch up to Singapore's open economy no matter whether BN or Pakatan ruled, Zaid Ibrahim said.

The former law minister said this in a written response to ex-premier Mahathir Mohamad's comment that "Malaysia would be like Singapore" if Pakatan ruled.

Mahathir implied that Chinese-majority DAP, which had once split from Singapore's ruling People's Action Party (PAP), would hold sway over economic and political policy, Zaid said.

In a blog posting, Zaid first lauded the benefits of becoming like the city-state.

"Our corruption index would be low, our civil servants more multiracial, our public transport second to none and our economic position would be much stronger.

"Our public toilets would definitely be much cleaner. Even our public housing and affordable home-ownership models would be the talk of other countries," Zaid wrote on **'The Zaidgeist'**.

Then he dismissed the possibility that this could ever happen and noted that "Malayness" would be the biggest stumbling block.

"There are plenty of reasons why I think we will not be like Singapore. Our Malay leaders, whether from the BN or Pakatan, are very protective of Malays," Zaid wrote.

This contrasted to Singapore leader Lee Kuan Yew, who did not fret over "westernisation".

"He was not worried that the Chinese would somehow be a 'lesser' people if they were to be modernised and westernised. Our Malay leaders on the other hand are always worried if Malays are 'Malay enough' as a result of modernisation," Zaid said.

"Lee Kuan Yew was not interested in reinforcing the religious or moral dictates of the Chinese community. He focused only on aspects of public morality that were necessary to build a strong nation.

"He was not concerned if the Chinese were good Buddhists or Taoists. In this sense, it helped that he was not 'God-fearing' such as our leaders are."

Because Malay leaders in Malaysia have taken on the arduous task of keeping and even purifying the practise of Islam in the country, such leaders faced a dilemma when drawing up the school curriculum, for example, Zaid said.

This explained much of the panned flip-flop in education policies, he added.

'The national school has disappeared'

"The national school that we once had has disappeared because of the introduction of religion into the school system.

"The look and feel of the national school is gone, which partly explains the proliferation of 'national-type' schools.

"The rich, of course, gravitate to private and international schools while ministers send their children overseas," he said.

But Zaid conceded that Singapore and Malaysia may probably converge, some 30 years into the future. This was because both drove citizens away in favour of foreigners but for different reasons.

The exodus from Singapore was due to scarcity of land while in Malaysia, the lack of "homegrown talent" will simply lead the government to import more foreign expertise to meet the country's economic and developmental needs.

Therefore, Zaid concluded: "This begs the question - if we are going to end up like Singapore in 30 years, why bother trying to be like them now?"

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