

Zaid: 'Celaka' + Umno = sedition
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In Malaysia, it is not the words uttered that matter for the purpose of the law, but it is the person or object of the utterance that counts, says former minister Zaid Ibrahim.

Umno, Zaid said, has now placed itself in the same category as Islam and the Malay rulers.

"You cannot insult any of them. You must not make them angry. You must not provoke them.

"They have elevated themselves as 'sacred', so do not upset them because the police will charge you with sedition - Umno's anger will convulse the country.

"The people will fall headlong into rebellion and all will be engulfed by disorder," he added.

The former Umno MP was commenting on the impending sedition charge against DAP Seri Delima assemblyperson RSN Rayer (right) for uttering the words "Umno celaka" in the Penang state assembly.

However, Zaid agreed that using the term "celaka" (damned) in the legislature was not proper but also noted that it was freely used by the public.

The former PKR leader also cited several examples, which were peppered with some bitter personal experiences, especially with regard to his contest against Azmin Ali for the PKR deputy presidency in the past.

"Its (celaka) use might incite anger in some people, but it doesn't seem to annoy DAP or Anwar Ibrahim.

"For example, if I say 'Celaka DAP!' for not making me chief minister of Penang, or 'Celaka Anwar!' for not supporting me against Azmin, it's not seditious. No one bats an eyelid.

"Perkasa, Isma and Ridhuan Tee Abdullah can say anything seditious or provocative, or even incite hatred, but they never make those utterances against Umno.

"They speak against others who are not 'sacred', and that's why it is unlikely they will ever be successfully prosecuted for sedition," he added in his blog.

'I too may be charged'

Zaid said this is the reason behind Perkasa chief Ibrahim Ali's opposition to repealing the

Sedition Act, because people like him know that it can be used as a “sword that cuts only one way.”

The lawyer by training also predicted that the sedition law might be thrown at him as well over his critical remarks.

"I am sure it is a matter of time before I, too, become the subject of a police investigation and I might even be charged with sedition. You see, I care a lot about the future of the Malays and the country as a whole.

"Inevitably, I will criticise Umno or the prime minister. I will attack policies of the government when I think they are wrong and in doing so, I will possibly bring disaster to the people," he said.

Zaid (right) also said that Rayer and his defence team must be supported, and if the case proceeds, it must go the highest court in the land.

"We must all pray that the judges will differentiate Umno from the institutions that are generally accepted as beyond insult.

"We hope the court will protect and defend our right to criticise and even insult a political party or parties (and their leaders) as part of the democratic process in our country.

"We hope the court will take cognisance of the fact that many have repeatedly uttered 'Celaka DAP', 'Celaka Anwar Ibrahim', and so forth, without any action being taken against them," he added.