

Zuhdi: I defended Christians' use of 'Allah'
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Embattled PAS central committee member Mohd Zuhdi Marzuki has sought to deflect accusations of bigotry by highlighting his track record in defending the use of 'Allah' by non-Muslims.

After two days of silence, Zuhdi yesterday took to Facebook to switch on a spotlight on his past comments in the social media.

One of this was a January 2013 discussion where Zuhdi crossed swords with religious scholar Aizam Mas'ud who had slammed Pakatan Rakyat for supporting the right of Christians to use 'Allah' to refer to God in Bahasa Malaysia.

"Muslims in Europe do not have (Islamic religious authorities) Jakim, Ikim and Yadim. Muslims there use the word 'Allah'. Christians there have also started to accept the word in their Bible, which can attract them to Islam.

"(Yet) Muslims in Malaysia have all of them (religious authorities), but are afraid when Christians accept the word 'Allah' to refer to God," he said.

Zuhdi, who is also PAS research centre chief operating officer, added that studies showed the 'Allah for Christians' stand had affected support for PAS but the Islamist party would nevertheless stand firm.

"If PAS made its stand based on political interest, it would have agreed with Perkasa, Jati and the rest (right-wing groups). PAS contests in seats which are almost all majority Malay.

"PAS research centre has found that the 'Allah' issue hurts Malay support for PAS but Islamic laws cannot be set aside simply for votes," he said.

However, in the midst of the Facebook debate, PAS Syura Council decided that non-Muslims may not use the word 'Allah' as translation for 'God' in Malay-language bibles.

Criticism against DAP deflected

In another Facebook posting, Zuhdi shared a video of him in a March 13 forum where he quashed criticism against opposition coalition partner DAP.

In the video, Zuhdi dismissed DAP's role in the May 13 riots, stating that the bloody racial clash was a result of income disparity between the rich and the poor.

He also sought to placate concerns that DAP may one day take control of the country.

Zuhdi said there were only 52 out of 222 parliamentary seats with a substantial Chinese population and DAP could never contest in more than 50 of them.

In contrast, he said the remaining Malay-majority seats were contested by PAS and PKR and these two parties often put up Malay candidates against non-Malay candidates in the BN, such as in Hulu Selangor.

"I think it is impossible, based on mathematical calculations, for DAP to come to power with 50 seats," he said.

Zuhdi quipped that if DAP won all its seats and PAS suffered a heavy defeat at Umno's hands, Umno may even offer to join forces with DAP.

However, he added, DAP would not want to go the way of PAP in Singapore which was already bleeding support from the republic's youth.

Among the panellists in that forum were Umno's Tun Faisal Ismail Aziz and Pembela's Yusri Mohamad.

Zuhdi provided little comment on both of his latest Facebook postings.

He has come under heavy criticism after his WhatsApp message, in which he presented a scenario of PAS joining forces with Umno to take over Selangor, was leaked online.

In the message, Zuhdi remarked if the coalition was formed, Malay and Muslim dominance can be secured and non-Muslims' complaints about religious freedom can then be 'swatted away' (jentik).

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