

'In no man's land, Najib talks but nobody listens'

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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak is not getting the support of extremists or moderates, said former minister Zaid Ibrahim.

"He is in political no man's land, speaking to nowhere man and getting the attention of nobody. I feel sorry for him," he added.

The former Umno lawmaker said that Najib has thus far been playing different tunes to different crowds.

"Often, he has chosen to remain characteristically silent on important issues so that he can continue to be blue, black, or yellow depending on whatever seems popular," he added.

However, Zaid said Najib must have realised by now that trying to be "50 percent moderate" and "50 percent Ibrahim Ali" would not work.

"This time he must - to save his job - commit to a position: either agree with Perkasa and forget about those promises of reform, or be a real agent of change," he added.

Zaid (right), whose comments come amid Umno's general assembly, also took a swipe at the party's slogan for this year's meet, which is "Malays Unite".

"Malays are not easily fooled by the false alarm, repeated over 40 years, that their problems stem primarily from their lack of unity and that the Chinese 'threat', whatever that is, can be overcome by nothing more than mere sloganeering.

"It would have been better had Najib (who is also Umno president) changed the slogan to 'Let's Get Real'.

"It would have been better had he made a serious attempt to thwart former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad's growing criticisms of his administration by outlining new policies that are believable and needed today," he added.

Change attitude to win Chinese support

Meanwhile, Zaid reminded Najib that Chinese support would not come without a change in attitude.

"If Najib needs their votes, as he explained when defending the continued existence of vernacular schools, then it is not enough to say merely that we must not close the schools because we need Chinese votes.

"If I were Chinese I wouldn't be impressed with this kind of reasoning because: come 2030 when the population of Malay-Muslim voters reaches 75 percent, the authorities can then close vernacular schools because Chinese votes would no longer count," he added.

According to Zaid, it would have been more fitting had Najib said that at the time of Independence, the founding fathers of the country agreed on the existence of vernacular schools, and therefore as prime minister he would honour that agreement come what may.

"Chinese and Indian Malaysians might then view Najib differently," he said.

On the subject of Islam, he said Najib seemed to be contented with letting his minister Jamil Khir Baharom (left) have a free hand seeking and demanding more power and more money for the institutions the latter controls.

"The Islamists in Umno might vote for Najib because of Jamil Khir's rhetoric. Others might vote for Najib because Jamil has spoken against pluralism and the transgender community.

"But there are many who would reject them both for their own reasons and whatever Najib or Jamil Khir do would never be enough to please them.

"So why not get real and appeal to the many voters who are more interested in stability but who want more meaningful transformations based on Islamic ideals?

"Why not unveil a grand plan to save Malay youths from drug addiction or do something concrete to stop Muslim divorces reaching epidemic proportions?" he added.

Beware of Dr Mahathir

Zaid also cautioned Najib that if Mahathir wanted someone out of office, the former premier would succeed in doing so.

He added that Najib must be prepared to risk it all by showing more earnestness in delivering on his election promises.

"He must tell the country that 1Malaysia Development Berhad was a mistake and must promise that the reorganisation of the company will see some wholesome change. New and trusted professionals need to be brought in to salvage the business.

"He should also ask Umno delegates if they want BR1M (Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia) to continue and, if so, why.

"He should lead discussions on this issue so that Umno will be seen as responsive to the concerns of many Malays that BR1M is not providing optimum results," he added.

The former minister also said that Najib must also be prepared to alienate Perkasa by

standing firm on the principles of the BN alliance.

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