

## **'Will I end up buried like Ghafar Baba?'**

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Zaid Ibrahim, who has thrown his hat into the ring for PKR deputy president's post, feared that he may end up buried in the upcoming party leadership polls as Ghafar Baba was back in 1993.

He recalled how the former deputy prime minister was so badly undermined by Umno leaders that he had to withdraw from defending his No 2 post in the party.

NONEZaid (right) lamented that a year ago he was hailed a hero, but is now labelled as an Umno agent out to destroy PKR.

The PKR supreme council member, who joined PKR in 2008, expressed regret that his decision to contest in the upcoming party polls has caused "unease" amongst certain quarters.

"Someone even paid a popular Malay blogger to tarnish my name. The blogger was asked to write that I will pay RM20,000 to the branch that nominates me, and write that I was tasked by (former finance minister) Daim Zainuddin to come in and destroy PKR," he said in a statement which was released yesterday but embargoed until 7am today.

"My loyalty has also been questioned by certain PKR parliamentarians, but loyalty to whom, they did not mention. Perhaps I am not loyal to the party cause or to the highest leadership, I don't know," he said.

"Perhaps these MPs will come forward and explain why my nomination will not be supported come Monday (today) at their press conferences to show their support for the great Anwar Ibrahim-Azmin Ali combination," he sniped.

anwar return pc 311004 anwar with syed husin and azmin aliZaid appeared to resign to the possibility that Anwar may team up with his long-time loyalist Azmin as candidates for president and deputy president respectively.

According to Zaid, incumbent president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail could be asked to give way, while current deputy president Syed Husin Ali is also expected not to defend his post.

'PKR must practice what it preaches'

The former de facto law minister finds it peculiar that a year ago he was hailed a "hero" and a "brave, principled political champion unconcerned with power and post", and yet today he is considered a "troublemaker and one who will sell the party out to Umno."

Zaid notes that personal attacks against him has stepped up ahead of the party polls, adding sarcastically that during the Hulu Selangor by-election it was Umno who had "bludgeoned" him.

"I joined Keadilan because I want this party to work with Pakatan (Rakyat) to change the culture and political power in this country so that Malaysians can have a government that is just and fair.

"In this struggle, my loyalty has not budged an inch... that is why I am offering myself to

the contest," he said.

According to him, for PKR to be able to change the political culture of this country, it must first to practice the principles that it holds dear within the party.

"I will explain this further during my campaign," he said.

Zaid had announced yesterday that he was contesting the party No 2 post while breaking fast in Kuantan with 30 Pahang liaison committee and party members.

He conceded that while he was not "blindly loyal", he is part of a political organisation that is democratic and one that is open to criticism. PKR, he said, is not a "cult organisation" whose members "deify their supreme leaders"

"I support those who are honest and wise, and shun those who are pretentious. If that means I am not loyal, then let the members decide my fate," he said.

He may suffer Ghafar's fate

Zaid revealed that he had been warned he would be buried in the race as Ghafar was.

ghafar babaGhafar (left) was appointed as deputy in 1986 by then prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad after rival Musa Hitam quit the post.

The veteran leader, who was older than Mahathir, was challenged at the 1993 Umno polls by up-and-coming leader Anwar, who had cut his political teeth as party's Youth chief and later vice-president.

"I remember the incident in 1993 where Ghafar was bashed by Umno until he could not garner enough nominations and had to withdraw," said Zaid.

"His years of loyal service to the party - all forgotten just like that. They couldn't even afford him a little respect by supporting his nomination just because there was a new hero emerging at the time - Anwar Ibrahim," said Zaid, without any hint of irony.

In the run-up to the 1993 party election, Anwar had assembled a formidable team of Umno leaders to back his candidacy at a press conference.

When Ghafar realised that he would be unable to secure the required nominations from the party, he withdrew from the contest.

"I cannot forget seeing the dismay and weariness on Ghafar's face in Masjid Telipot in Kota Bharu, sitting alone on the stairs of the masjid," said Zaid.

"I greeted him and told him that I too had lost the Kota Bharu division contest so I could not help him. He just nodded.

"If my fate is to end up like Pak Ghafar, so be it. In my political struggle, the math is simple. If it is the truth, I will support. If it is false, I will oppose it," said Zaid.

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