

Zaid: I say what I think
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EXCLUSIVE Outspoken politician Zaid Ibrahim takes a straight view of his forthright comments on PKR - that these are necessary to do away with the "unnecessary".

"People say I whine, but I'm not whining, I'm just saying what I think. Just call a spade a spade... (party *de facto* leader) Anwar (Ibrahim) and the other leaders should not beat about the bush," he said.

Zaid was asked about statements he had made after offering himself for the party's deputy presidency.

In his blog, he had written that incumbent president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail is filling in a "puppet post" and that Anwar should offer himself as the next president.

The comments hit a raw nerve among the old guard, with outgoing deputy president Syed Husin Ali saying Zaid lacks discipline and questioning his contributions as Pakatan Rakyat coordinator, a post he was given soon after he joined the opposition party last year.

Zaid, who quit as *de facto* law minister in 2008 during Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's premiership, defended his remarks, stressing that he did not make them to merely rock the boat.

He acknowledged that there had been good reason for creating Anwar's *de facto* position at the party congress in Seremban in 2007, as the latter was disqualified from holding any political post at the time.

But Zaid questioned the rationale of maintaining the post even after the disqualification was lifted, pointing out that the possibility of Anwar losing his second sodomy trial should not be an excuse to validate its continued existence.

"I'm a very careful person and I don't say things lightly. I mean what I say... we all know where the seat of power lies, so why hide behind a facade?"

"My concern is that we have to run our organisation like other organisations. We can't be run by proxies, where 'I have no power but I have control'. That's not good. I am simply articulating something everyone knows."

Zaid, who was sacked from Umno in 2008 for "attending opposition events", held nothing back as he questioned what his detractors mean by a "newbie" rocking the boat.

He took a swipe at his polls rival Azmin Ali, telling the latter to "be honest" and say openly that he does not want "newbies to take (away) his chance (of becoming deputy president)".

Azmin had said in an interview that PKR had painstakingly built a culture over its 12-year existence and that it is not a "lab rat" for "newbies" to come in and change the way the party works.

'Spin goes on'

Zaid also commented on the many rumours about him, from his alleged co-ownership of news portal *FreeMalaysiaToday* to his purported ties with businessman Soh Chee Wen and former finance minister Daim Zainuddin.

"I don't have the kind of money to set up a portal, for what? This is the kind of politics that Umno used against me, 'Oh, Zaid is very wealthy'. But when I ask where is the wealth from, nobody tells me anything.

"But the spin is on and on and on... there is nothing to counter what I said, so what is the approach that they take? They make me look like a bad guy, an ungrateful guy. This is the same strategy adopted by my opponents, unfortunately in my own party.

"Why can't you say my idea on this and that is rubbish? It's always personality - am I religious enough, am I a good enough Malay, I'm sponsored to contest in Keadilan ... (it is all) perception, like (Nazi propaganda chief Joseph) Goebbels said, you say a lie often enough and people will believe you."

The brickbats and "painful" accusations, particularly the claim that he has an overbearing ego, are a burden, but principles far outweigh inconvenience to him.

Zaid pointed out that he does not intend to rub people up the wrong way, but cannot help it if being frank leaves his colleagues "uncomfortable".

It is important to get straight to the point if the country hopes to grow in maturity, he said.

"I don't want to sound too critical. I want the party to do well and have a good organisation, and it's not just about PKR but also about the people who want to see change. If I wanted to 'play ball' in politics, it would probably be easier in Umno.

"I hope I don't sound too critical, but if that is the net result, so be it. I can't not tell what I think (based on) what I see, and if I have to be a victim of the process, then I accept it."

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