

**'PKR not yet an agent of change'**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**September 28, 2010**

EXCLUSIVE The truth can be a bitter pill to swallow when it is not flattering.

And the truth about PKR, in the eyes of deputy presidential hopeful Zaid Ibrahim, is that the party and its leaders are not being honest with themselves.

"PKR pretends to be a progressive party but it's not, and we have to move to the next level. (The direct elections are) part of the learning process, so we should respect the *ketua cabang* (division heads)... don't pressure them.

"If they want to nominate (Batu MP) Tian Chua, let it be. If they want to nominate (Padang Serai MP N) Gobala(krishnan), let it be.

"If they want to nominate Zaid, let it be. Why must you decide beforehand who is capable and who is not, when it is you who opened up the system?"

Zaid continued his scathing evaluation of the party he joined barely a year ago, to impress on all and sundry one simple message - it's time for more maturity.

He stressed that there is nothing that he has experienced in the party which indicates that it is ready to play a leading role as an agent of change in the political arena.

Taking the Hulu Selangor by-election as an example, Zaid, who was the darling of PKR when he first joined the party late last year, illustrated how quickly his welcome wore off.

"Hulu Selangor was a difficult experience for me... I believe I did not get the kind of support that I should have had," he said of the contest, which he **lost** to BN's P Kamalanathan.

Zaid said that, even then, he had faced the same arguments of loyalty and party seniority over his reform agenda, which he is similarly pushing for his deputy presidential campaign.

He cited a few theories as to why he has been operating on a shaky support structure, but was at a loss to say what exactly has caused the breakdown in communication.

"It's hard to say. It could be that the party structure was very weak, or that it was affected by a few party leaders who left as they were unhappy they were not chosen as candidates, or maybe there was sabotage either actively or by neglect... it could be a combination of these issues.

"Some leaders accused me of doing things my own way, but nobody would do things their own way if they had a choice."

Framing his experience in Hulu Selangor, Zaid said it clearly illustrates how much further the party needs to grow before it can claim to have the maturity to convince Malaysians that PKR is a credible option for the country.

This brought him to the reason for contesting the deputy presidency - to get his message across.

"It is not the post, but the role that is important. Position is only important if you can do something with it, and I have relinquished a position that was much higher than a deputy presidency," he said.

Zaid was *de facto* law minister in the Abdullah Ahmad Badawi administration, but quit in 2008 after being hauled up for 'consorting' with the opposition.

'PKR has to grow up'

The core of his message is to impress on all PKR members that only when they reach a level of sophistication and maturity that assures a stable democracy, can they safely say that they are worthy of representing the interests of the people.

He noted that there is always a danger of falling into the same trap that has ensnared Umno, where a "certain class of people" are allowed to entrench themselves in the system with little room for anyone else.

"I hear the issue of loyalty being bandied about, but the question is loyalty to whom? If (you are) loyal to reform, changes, the struggle for justice, I think that is a very important question to ask.

Zaid said he still believes that it is the opposition that will change the tone of politics in Malaysia.

For this reason, he feels it is important for PKR to learn to be gracious enough to extend its hand in cooperation, not only to its Pakatan Rakyat colleagues, but also to politicians from across the divide.

He admitted that the opposition and its supporters cannot be blamed for their anger with the ruling BN coalition, which has treated the opposition with contempt and has dealt out countless incidents of injustice for which they must be held to account.

"But we cannot always be in that mode. Just because the BN takes a very unfortunate stance that the opposition are enemies that should be killed (off), I don't think we should respond accordingly.

"I think we have to grow, we have to evolve. Political parties have to, at some point, for the sake of the country, agree on something.

"So we cannot be perpetual enemies, cannot be in that state of warfare.

"I hope to lead that change... sometimes we have bipartisan support and sometimes we fight civilly, but we should not become enemies. I don't think this will happen in my lifetime, but we have to start somewhere and I will play what little part I can... there's no shortcut."