

Zaid looks set on forming new party
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It appears inevitable that former Federal Territories PKR chief Zaid Ibrahim will leave the party and set up his own, judging from interviews with two pro-Umno dailies published today.

NONEZaid (right) had previously announced during a dialogue in Kedah that he plans to form a "Keadilan baru" should he be sacked from PKR.

"I have announced this and I will do it on a small scale. No problems. I don't want politics that is meant just for power which adopts methods that are not beneficial to the people.

"The new party will be based on a struggle for democracy and a government that is accountable and transparent. If I win one or two seats, God willing, I will be very grateful," Zaid told Umno-owned Mingguan Malaysia today.

In the same breath, Zaid said that he has no major plans for politics and concedes that there are concerns that the new party would benefit the BN and weaken the opposition.

He claimed that the opposition now was no different from the BN and thus the new party has a role to encourage both sides to reform and transform.

"I am not interested in determining who rules the country, but how it is being run. If what I am doing will weaken the opposition, I don't know lah.

"But if the opposition is already weak and there is no cooperation or real struggle, then they really weak," he said.

He said that he has always based his politics on issues and policies and stressed that he has no intention of becoming prime minister or opposition leader.

'I want to be in Parliament by 2012'

In another interview with New Straits Times, Zaid said that he will leave PKR if the options present themselves, and said that he might even be sacked.

He stressed that he will continue to speak up for the public as long as his views are considered relevant, and that he will voice what he thinks the country needs.

"If can, I want to go back to Parliament in 2012. I will have to find a seat somewhere. If I have to form my own party, I will do it. Maybe not a big party. I will do what I feel," he said.

Zaid added that he will support Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak on certain issues based on their merit, and that he was also free to criticise both the BN and the opposition.

Asked if he would consider contesting for Parliament as an independent, Zaid skirted the question and instead hinted that he may be following the footsteps of Labour Party founder Tan Chee Khoo.

"I remember Tan Chee Khoon, who was a respected parliamentarian. He was Mr Opposition because the opposition then was very small.

"But I will have my style if there is a place for that role in Parliament," he said.

'I don't see myself in PKR'

Zaid dismissed Mingguan Malaysia's question if he was interested in joining Pakatan Rakyat allies PAS and DAP instead of forming a new party.

"With my image now, no one wants to take me in. They will say that Zaid is a troublemaker. I don't want to join either party; moreover, I am old.

"I want my political career to end in a party which reflects my idealism. Whether this will come to fruition is another story.

"I would prefer that one day, I am seen as a reformist who tried to help bring maturity to the process of democracy in this country," he said.

To another question by NST, Zaid concurred when suggested that his days in PKR are numbered.

"Of course. I don't think I can work with (PKR de facto leader) Anwar (Ibrahim). That is why I suggested the solution; Anwar must go. But in reality, it is not possible.

"But I don't see myself in PKR. I just don't want to leave now because I want to see my friends around," he said.

'Anwar doesn't tolerate dissent'

Commenting on Anwar, Zaid said that the former deputy premier was not a factor in his decision last year to join PKR.

NONE "If I was mistaken about Anwar (left), so was (former premier) Dr Mahathir (Mohamad) and many other people, so you cannot fault me by that. I was just an ordinary Umno member.

"I did not join PKR because of Anwar, I joined a political party that suited my political beliefs and ideals. I thought PKR is the vehicle but I never joined with my eyes closed.

"It takes a while for you to be convinced of a person. I did not want to be hasty as well. I have heard a lot about him before and when you do not know the person, you give him the benefit of the doubt," he said.

Zaid said that he had never had a close relationship with Anwar, even during their Umno days.

While in PKR, Zaid said that he and Anwar used to discuss the direction of the party.

However, he said, Anwar made changes that he could not accept, and eventually discovered that it was difficult to work with the de facto party leader.

"I do not know whether he tolerates (dissent) or not, but only his views count," said Zaid.

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