

**Zaid needs lessons on the importance of being earnest**  
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COMMENT "You have to replace the existing leader with someone who is doing better. I do not see that happening today. On the menu you have (Prime Minister) Najib Tun Razak and Anwar. Although I'm in the opposition, I think that Najib is way ahead in terms of ability and integrity."

The last bit in the above sentence from an interview Zaid Ibrahim gave Free Malaysia Today ought to be read a few times to get an idea of how far Zaid has come since the days he quit the cabinet in late 2008.

NONE In the run-up to the Umno elections of March 2009, Zaid was on record as advising Najib not to run for the presidency of Umno because he had too much explaining to do over the Altantuya Shaariibuu murder.

Zaid, who joined PKR in June 2009, kept up that line of argument for the rest of the year, casting doubt on the new prime minister's ability to introduce economic and political reforms to party and country for the simple reason that such reforms would require Najib's disqualification to hold office in the first place.

To follow Zaid's logic, it appears that Najib, in all of 2010, has made such radical improvements to his leadership form that he is preferable to Anwar in terms of integrity (let's leave the question of ability aside), that the troubling questions with respect to the Mongolian woman's death have somehow vanished.

Zaid's volte face

Only diehard Anwaristas would sustain the pretence, particularly after PKR's recent exercise in leader-selection, that Anwar Ibrahim is some white knight coming to the rescue of country, or in the words of his wife Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, "God's gift" to the reformasi movement.

hulu selangor by-election nomination 170410 zaid anwar khalid While the admiration of acolytes and hyperbolic praise from one's spouse are understandable, what explains Zaid's volte face on the question of Najib's integrity which, according to Zaid, was abysmal enough to disqualify him from being Umno president and PM in early 2009, and is now sufficiently restored to supercede Anwar's?

Has Najib gone through some exercise in purgation that has untangled him from the web of suspicion dogging him since details of the Altantuya murder began trickling out from late 2006 when the case first hit the headlines?

Zaid has had and continues to have good reasons to dissent from the clique he claims surrounds Anwar in PKR and gives the party supremo a dangerous sense of infallibility.

But he does no help to his arguments by being the intellectual equivalent of an eccentric Irish bartender who serves up odd spirits – one part illuminating, another exasperating.

TERENCE NETTO has been a journalist for close on four decades. He likes the occupation because it puts him in contact with the eminent without being under the necessity to admire them. It is the ideal profession for a temperament that finds power fascinating and its exercise abhorrent.

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