

Don't appoint Najib as new premier
Malaysiakini.com
Mar 18, 2009

Sacked Umno veteran Zaid Ibrahim today called on the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to make the right choice - by not appointing Najib Abdul Razak as the country's next prime minister.

"These are difficult times. Malaysia needs a leader who will unite the country in the face of adversity. Divided we are weak.

"I am loath to say it but for the reasons that I have set out, I am compelled to say that Najib will most certainly divide us and in doing so, will nudge us closer to the edge," he said.

Speaking at the Royal Rotary Club of Kuala Lumpur's weekly luncheon meeting, the former law minister said there are still well-qualified Umno parliamentarians who could be appointed as prime minister.

"For King and country, I urge His Majesty to take into consideration the prerequisites to the appointment and the concerns of the rakyat.

"There is no constitutional obligation on His Majesty to appoint the president of Umno as the prime minister," he added in his hard-hitting speech titled 'If truth be told'.

Najib is slated to assume the prime minister's post later this month when Abdullah Ahmad Badawi steps down.

Save for the dawn of Merdeka, Zaid said, never in the history of this country has the choice of prime minister been so crucial.

Malaysia, he noted, is in crisis. "We are facing tremendous economic challenges with unavoidably harsh socio-political consequences. Our much undermined democracy is once again being assailed by those who would prefer a more autocratic form of governance.

"Our public institutions are hollowed out caricatures, unable to distinguish vested party interests from national ones, unable to offer the man in the street refuge from the powerful and connected.

"Our social fabric that took us from colony to an independent nation and on through the obstacles of nation building has reached a point where it sometimes feel like we are hanging on by a thread. This is the Malaysia we live in," he said.

'Ill-fated' decision

Zaid also described Abdullah's impending resignation as an 'ill-fated' decision.

"I say ill-fated not because he has been a great prime minister and we would lose irreplaceable leadership, that is regrettably not the case as all things said and done, Abdullah could have done

much more for Malaysia.

"Rather, I say that his resignation is ill-fated because his departure will expose the country to forces which may take us down the road of perdition faster than ever," he said.

"Much has been said of Pak Lah (Abdullah) being a weak leader. However, what his critics have not adequately addressed are the consequences of replacing him as prime minister with the anticipated incoming president of Umno.

"It is an undeniable truth that the average Malaysian is anxious about the anticipated transition. Many would prefer it did not happen," he added.

According to Zaid, there are two reasons why this is so.

The first, he said, has to do with the reasoning underlying Umno's demand for the transition itself.

"The second has to do with Najib personally," he added.

Zaid, who was appointed to the cabinet by Abdullah after the March 8 polls, quit last year when he openly disagreed with the government's decision to detain three people under the Internal Security Act (ISA).

The former Kota Bharu MP was later sacked from Umno after he was seen at several opposition functions.

NEIL KHOR PhD (Cambridge) is co-author of *Non-Sectarian Politics in Malaysia: The Case of Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia* (2008).

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/100434>