

Umno cracks down on 'president's men'
Malaysiakini.com
Mar 18, 2009

Umno's former Kota Baru division leader Zaid Ibrahim believes that the disciplinary board is targeting supporters of outgoing party president Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"It is unfortunate that the Abdullah's premiership has seen more than its share of political and economic challenges, but it is even more regrettable that his supporters have been targeted as ineligible for the polls," he said in a statement today.

Yesterday, the disciplinary board barred deputy president aspirant Mohd Ali Rustam, a staunch backer of Abdullah, from contesting, as he was found to have breached campaign rules.

Abdullah's son-in-law Khairy Jamaluddin was given a "stern warning" for a similar offence.

Although unrelated to the disciplinary board hearings, Khairy's close ally and Umno supreme council member Norza Zakaria has been charged in court with graft following a Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) probe.

Another known Abdullah loyalist, Tourism Minister Azalina Othman Said is being probed by the MACC following the arrest of her aide who was caught with RM75,000 in cash.

'Board not a court of law'

Zaid pointed out that, on the eve of each Umno elections, a selected group of politicians are deemed corrupt or tainted.

"This selective prosecution has nothing do with justice. The disciplinary board does not act on the basis of the rule of evidence and neither is there an ethics guideline which governs the board," he noted.

"If and when it is time to stop or terminate a politician's career, the board acts. I should know."

Zaid was suspended as a party member for 18 months after criticising the disciplinary board in Parliament in 2005.

His bone of contention was the board's decision to issue him a stern warning over alleged breach of campaign rules during the 2004 party elections.

Zaid urged Malaysians not to be swayed by the board's crackdown, which he described as a form of "theatrics" and a "charade".

"We face a great challenge ahead of us which is selecting the new prime minister of Malaysia, and that must be the main preoccupation of us all," he added.

Zaid was sacked from Umno last December after attending events organised by the opposition front Pakatan Rakyat.