

ZAHID BLAMES DR M, POLITICAL CONSPIRACY

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Umno president says 3 Umno MPs who quit the party were threatened, spared prosecution

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DATUK Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi took the stand yesterday and gave his account of the political shenanigans that took place after Barisan Nasional (BN) lost the 14th General Election, claiming that he ended up in the dock as he refused to play ball with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Umno president told the High Court here he now faced 47 charges, while other Umno members of parliament had jumped ship after being convinced it would save them from legal action.

Zahid cited three Umno MPs — Masjid Tanah, Jeli and Bagan Serai — as the first to abandon the party when threatened.

“I have all the facts and evidence about why they did it. Masjid Tanah, who is now a

deputy minister, had misused party election funds, Jeli had also done the same.

“He took RM30 million of election funds that had been given to him for logistics purposes and banked it into his wife’s account.

“This is not hearsay... I have all the facts, documents and other evidence,” he said, referring to the MPs by their constituencies and not by name.

However, he did name Bagan Serai MP Datuk Dr Noor Azmi Ghazali, who left Umno in June 2018 to be an independent before joining Parti Pribumi Bersatu in November that year.

Zahid said he had documents to show Dr Noor Azmi had abused election funds for his constituency and the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission was about to start investigations.

“I have all the facts and evidence because I was carrying out the duties of the Umno president then,” he said when testifying in his own defence from the witness stand.

He said Dr Mahathir had pressured him to dissolve Umno after BN was toppled following its disastrous performance in GE14.

“I was told he wanted to meet me, and I did so in June 2018. He then demanded that I dissolve Umno or face the consequences.

“I refused to do what he wanted and in July the same year I was called in by MACC.

“Then, in October I was charged and that is how I have ended up here now,” he said, adding that the sequence of events showed that there was a political conspiracy against him.

Earlier, lead prosecutor Datuk Raja Rozela Raja Toran objected to Zahid’s testimony, arguing that it was hearsay.

“It is merely for political assassination and should not be allowed,” she said.

Zahid’s lead counsel, Hisyam Teh Poh Teik, countered by saying the defence should be given latitude to expand their narrative on the charges that had been levelled against his client.

“We have no intention to cast mischief or ill intention against anyone,” he said.

Judge Datuk Collin Lawrence Sequerah said he would grant leeway to the defence but that the admissibility of Zahid’s evidence would be decided later.

Zahid is facing 47 criminal breach of trust, graft and money laundering charges involving charity foundation Yayasan Akalbudi funds, and he has been ordered to enter his defence against all charges.

The trial continues.