

In Shah Alam, Zul Noordin apologises, blames Pakatan for Selangor faith row
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By Amin Iskandar

SHAH ALAM, April 22 — Barisan Nasional (BN) candidate Datuk Zulkifli Noordin apologised to Indians last night in Shah Alam while on the second day of his Election 2013 campaign trail for having uttered insults against Malaysia's third biggest faith group in the past.

The Perkasa vice-president also attempted to shift the blame put on him, telling Selangor's Indians they should be more upset with the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) state government for demolishing their temples and shrines than whatever he had ever done.

"I, when told, dey, you say that like it's wrong. Those Indians feel hurt. I say sorry immediately, I was wrong, I apologise," said the vocal leader of the right-wing Malay group allied to the BN coalition, of his statements reportedly insulting Hindus that had gone viral on YouTube in the past few weeks.

"But if you blame me for that statement, you must be angry with the PKR, DAP and PAS government who made worse insults against Hindus. Demolishing temples in someone's home. Demolishing a 124-year-old temple in Selangor is more despicable," he said, referring to the Hindu temple he claimed the state government tore down last October.

According to Zulkifli, he became aware that Malaysians of different races and religions could live together in harmony in the country after joining BN.

The backdrop of the reception hall of the Hotel Panmour here where he was speaking last night hung a banner, which read in Malay: "Together with Najib who puts People First, Vote Zulkifli Noordin."

Before him, a sea of some 100 Indians, the majority of them young.

"I have said it in many places. I practised extremist politics, racist politics, chauvinism, because the opposition DAP, PKR, PAS taught us that.

"Not only racist, chauvinist towards Indians, but towards our own races. We Malays in the opposition were taught to hate our own race," he said at the dinner organised by the Selangor Persatuan Kebajikan dan Kesejahteraan Insan Petaling.

Zulkifli also likened the idea of a 1 Malaysia that prioritised the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities in Malaysia to the consumption of sirih, or chewing betel leaves, popular among the older generation in the past.

"We Malays, Chinese and Indians in Malaysia, are like sirih," he said, using the Malay word for betel leaves as well as the practice.

"Malays are the leaves, Malays are the green leaves, he is big. The Chinese, he the areca nut, he is a little small. Indians are the slaked lime, sunarpu.

"Brother, if you eat sirih, even though the Malay leaf is bigger, the Chinese nut is there, but if there's no sunarpu, no slaked lime, that sirih will not be red at all," he said, to thunderous applause from the floor.

The BN decision to field Zulkifli, the Kulim Bandar Baharu incumbent who was once a lawyer for Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, has been laced with controversy from the get-go.

He was recently catapulted to notoriety over an old video of him speaking at a religious seminar, in which he had questioned the purity of the Ganges River, also known as Ganga in India, which is considered sacred by Hindus.

Zulkifli became a BN-friendly independent MP and critical of the opposition when he was dismissed from PKR on March 6, 2010 over a police report he lodged against Shah Alam incumbent Khalid Abdul Samad of PAS.

His appointment has provided much fodder for leaders from PR in its nationwide electoral campaign for the May 5 polls, with the federal three-party opposition pact encouraging Indian voters not to support BN.

MIC leader S. Vell Paari had warned party president Datuk Seri G. Palanivel in a text message that BN could lose in Selangor if it insists on fielding Zulkifli in Shah Alam.

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