

**Khairy defends Zahid, says 'migrate' call was personal view, not Putrajaya's
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KUALA LUMPUR, May 17 — New minister Khairy Jamaluddin came to the defence of his senior Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi today, saying the home minister was merely expressing his own opinion in telling Malaysians unhappy with the country's political system to migrate elsewhere.

Ahmad Zahid, who had swapped his defence portfolio for home affairs, had come under flak from the opposition Pakatan Rakyat over his controversial writing published yesterday in Umno-owned Utusan Malaysia.

"It is his personal opinion. It does not reflect the government's position," first-term sports and youth minister Khairy (picture) told a news conference.

The Cabinet's youngest minister said Ahmad Zahid's statement should be taken in context with the whole article, adding that the latter was likely trying to explain how the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition could form the government even though it gained only 47 per cent of the popular vote.

"He was trying to put across that we have a certain system in the country, first past the post.

"We don't have a direct democracy. We don't have a system where whoever wins the popular vote can form the government," the 37-year-old was quoted saying.

Khairy also weighed in Datuk Seri Najib Razak's proposal for a national reconciliation process, urging Malaysians unhappy with the electoral outcome to challenge the results in court instead of taking it out in street protests.

Some groups have described the prime minister's remark attributing the BN's weaker results in the May 5 polls to a "Chinese tsunami" as striking a dissonant chord.

"There are those who voted for us, and those who did not.

"We were chosen to be the government. As leaders, we should undertake our responsibilities without any prejudice, and act in a fair and equitable manner," Khairy said.

Ahmad Zahid wrote in Utusan yesterday that Malaysians needed to accept PR's failure to win federal power in Malaysia's first-past-the-post system, despite BN losing the popular vote for the first time since 1969 when it contested as the Alliance party then.

Tens of thousands of Malaysians have flooded five PR rallies throughout the country recently to protest against alleged vote-rigging in Election 2013 and to call for free and fair elections.

Election watchdog Tindak Malaysia said last year that one rural voter was worth an average of six urban voters, based on the way electoral boundaries were drawn.

Analysts have noted that BN retained federal power in Election 2013 by capturing the rural vote, with a significant chunk of its seats coming from Sabah and Sarawak, while

middle-class and urban voters that are concentrated in larger constituencies had deserted the coalition for PR.

The Election Commission has announced that a redelineation exercise will begin at the end of this year.

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