

Zaid: Opposition shouldn't be afraid to 'desire PM's post'

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Former Umno minister says one cannot talk about good governance and leadership but backtrack on issue of right of non-Muslims to lead the country.

PETALING JAYA: The people, including non-Muslim politicians, must not be afraid of speaking the truth, and that includes saying that any qualified Malaysian can become the prime minister, Zaid Ibrahim said in a blog post today.

He was referring to a motion passed by PAS at its recent general assembly (muktamar) urging the leadership and its MPs to push the government to amend the Federal Constitution so that only a Muslim can become prime minister.

"Any Malaysian can aspire to be prime minister, and that position must be supported by all of us who want this country to prosper.

"The only qualification for the premiership is that this person must be acceptable to the majority of the people of this country," the former Umno minister said.

Zaid also suggested that some non-Malay politicians are trying too hard in their responses to the PAS motion.

"Some non-Malay politicians are going the extra mile to remind Malays/Muslims that they have no wish to be prime minister.

"This is an understandable response given our current circumstances but it's the wrong one."

He said that anyone who is qualified and wants to serve the country well, must also be willing to be forthright.

"You cannot talk about good governance and leadership with integrity if you then backtrack and qualify it by saying that non-Malays are not acceptable or have no desire to be prime minister," Zaid said, alluding to statements by DAP leaders, including Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng, that non-Muslims have never sought the PM's post.

"Don't be afraid of PAS, Umno, Perkasa, Isma and the hundreds of other mosquito NGOs out there, all of which are the product of the 'katak dibawah tempurung' school of thought."

Zaid, who joined DAP earlier this year, warned that Umno and PAS will continue to use “fear-mongering tactics” to try and win over Malay voters.

“They will keep saying the Chinese (meaning DAP) are taking over the country, no matter how much the non-Malay leaders keep protesting otherwise.”

He said part of the fear could stem from the recent defeat by Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, more popularly known as Ahok, in the election to be Jakarta governor.

“After Ahok’s defeat in Jakarta’s gubernatorial election, non-Muslims everywhere have become extra careful about going for public office.”

Zaid, who is a lawyer, called for non-Malay leaders to take a more positive position and declare that every Malaysian can become the prime minister as long as the majority of Malaysians are happy with the choice.

“They should also say that even Penang can have a Malay chief minister if the majority of Chinese are happy with the person chosen for the post.

“This is about fighting racial prejudice and educating everyone about what’s good for them and the country,” Zaid said.

He reminded Malays that if they want the best non-Malay professionals in helping them in other areas of their life, then they should also accept whoever is best to run the country.

“If a Malay can be happy with the best heart surgeon who can take care of his sick heart, why should he be opposed to the selection of the best person available to save his sick country?”

Calling Muslim leaders who want only Malay-Muslims to be prime minister, as selfish, Zaid said that acceding to PAS’ motion will just see the country going down the wrong path with further impositions in future.

“Soon they will tell Malays that only Muslims who look like them can be prime minister, and that other Muslims are not ‘Islamic’ enough.

“If the only person who is fit to be prime minister is a Muslim leader who is chosen by Umno and PAS, and endorsed by Perkasa and Isma, then this country will turn into another Somalia or Yemen soon enough.”

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