

## **Zam: Umno will be at losing end if it uses racial rhetoric**

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### **Former Umno minister Zainuddin Maidin claims party is running out of moves to win the Malay vote in GE14.**

PETALING JAYA: Umno will be at the losing end if it were to use racial rhetoric as its trump card in the 14th General Election (GE14), says former information minister Zainuddin Maidin.

Referring to contradicting statements made by several Umno ministers, Zainuddin claimed that Umno would be deemed to be inconsistent if it chose to play the race card to woo the Malays in their bid to win the GE14.

“In December 2016, during the Umno general assembly, Prime Minister Najib Razak used scare tactics by saying the Malays will lose their rights if DAP ever came to power.

“Then last Saturday, Umno minister Salleh Said Keruak accused Pakatan Harapan of marginalising the DAP. This is not being consistent,” Zainuddin, also known as Zam, told FMT.

Following the announcement by PH of its new leadership council, Salleh, who is communications and multimedia minister, said PH had marginalised the DAP although the party had the most number of MPs in the opposition coalition.

The new PH leadership has DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng as one of three deputy presidents and Sarawak DAP chairman Chong Chieng Jen as one of the vice-presidents.

“Is DAP being sidelined or was this an intentional move so that the opposition pact is perceived to be dominated by the Malays?” the former Sabah chief minister had asked.

Zam added that Umno was running out of moves to win the Malay vote in the upcoming GE14 – claiming that the odds of the ruling party losing this time were higher.

“PAS already won Kelantan and Terengganu when they decided to apply part of shariah rulings (referring to public caning).

“Meanwhile, Umno might even lose some of its members to Pakatan Harapan.

“Now that the two figures, former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Anwar Ibrahim have forgiven each other, some of Anwar’s supporters will leave Umno and support Pakatan Harapan instead,” he predicted.

Another contributing factor, according to Zam, was that the new PH leadership line up was “appealing” to the people.

“Due to the dynamics of the new leadership, the progressive image and its idea of reformation, Pakatan Harapan is much more appealing to the people,” Zam said.

Earlier, The Straits Times reported that the new PH leadership line-up posed a great threat to Umno, and that this would see the latter “increase its pandering to Malay-Muslim insecurities” in the coming months.

According to the Singapore daily, Umno’s actions could be due to the fear of losing its grip on the crucial Malay vote bank after Mahathir formally took charge of the opposition last Friday.

“Umno has to work extra hard to defend its turf as Barisan Nasional’s ethnic minority parties have so far not mounted a credible challenge against the opposition... leading to a more racially-tinged campaign from both sides,” Vriens & Partners political analyst Adib Zalkapli told the ST.

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