

Amanah elusive about role in coming election

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By Leven Woon

Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah-led Amanah Merdeka (Amanah) is coy about being involved in the coming general election on its own banner.

Amanah would rather assume a larger role as an non-governmental organisation (NGO) to champion the rakyat's causes first, Amanah president Tengku Razaleigh said at the Selangor Amanah family day event in Sungai Buloh yesterday.

tengku razaleigh speech 110310 01Both Tengku Razaleigh, who is widely known as Ku Li, and Selangor Amanah chief Mazlan Harun, stressed in their speeches at the event that they want to "shape public policies through public opinions", and both remained non-committal about Amanah's political direction.

Amanah was founded by several former and current BN leaders, Ku Li said in his opening address, and it will enjoy better public support by being close to the needs of the grassroots.

He noted that the people at large have snubbed NGOs all this while because the policies of political parties were affecting their livelihood.

"It's time to move an active NGO that can lead opinion among the public. Now, everywhere we go, we hear people talking about change... how to change to make their life better, especially those burdened with uncertainties of the future?"

"If we can champion their causes, we will receive better response," the one-time finance minister and veteran Umno member added.

Education the key

The first step towards this, Ku Li said, is by setting up an Amanah Education Foundation that will collect deposits from parents and grow over the years through Amanah's investments in certain sectors.

He said the NGO's committee was now ironing out details on how to secure government approval to collect the deposits and will announce details of its proposal soon.

Meanwhile, Mazlan in his speech told the gathering that it was up to the Amanah members to decide which political party to back, but it would be good that if they "support the Amanah candidate, should there be one".

Commenting on the issue at the press conference later, Ku Li gave a non-committal answer when asked whether Amanah was still an NGO under the Registrar of Societies listing.

"To contest in a general election, we need the consensus of our members, and whether or not the government will allow us to be turned into a political party.

"But individual members can contest in the general election... there is nothing to stop them," he said.

Middle ground on PTPTN

Asked whether he would defend his Gua Musang parliamentary seat, he said he would "tell when the time comes".

On the debate surrounding calls to abolish the National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN), Ku Li branded his proposed education scheme as "the middle ground" to that debate.

"We are taking the middle ground, so we are introducing the scheme. If the parents think they cannot bear the cost of higher education, then they can money into the scheme," he said.

Asked whether a vocal Amanah will join activities from other civil society groups such as the coming Himpunan Hijau and Bersih 3.0 rallies, his answer was non-committal.

"We will only collaborate with them in areas such as education, children and the betterment of Malaysia.

"We will participate as long as it is in line with our objectives and meet the aspirations of our members. We can't be doing 1,000 things at a time," Ku Li added.

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