

Ian Chin: A 'brave and efficient judge'
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Tony Thien

Ian HC Chin, the Sabah and Sarawak High Court judge who made a number of explosive revelations from the bench yesterday, is known to the legal fraternity as a brave judge. MCPX

"He has served in Kuching for several years," said lawyer See Chee How. "Chin is known to be very courageous and efficient - things get moving very fast in his court."

The Sabah-born judge, once a practising lawyer in his home state, was briefly a politician - he contested in a number of elections on the Barisan Nasional ticket.

When he was later appointed a judge, he made waves in several high-profile cases, including two in Sarawak.

The first was an election petition filed in May 1997 by Donald Lawan, who stood as an Independent against BN's Mong Dagang in the state seat of Bukit Begunan (Sarawak).

Lawan, the losing candidate, had cited incidents of vote-buying in the election.

ian chin ian hn chin judgeChin eventually found evidence of corruption by Mong Dagang or his agents, and declared his election victory null and void.

Chin also raised judicial eyebrows when he declared in August 2001 that the natives in Bintulu have native customary rights over a disputed 672ha plot of land that the state authorities had leased to a well-connected plantation company, Borneo Paper and Pulp.

That decision was hailed by lawyers and campaigners alike as a landmark case on native customary rights.

Chin is now hearing another election petition by unsuccessful DAP candidate Dr Wong Hua Seh, who is petitioning the court to nullify the results of the election for the Sarikei parliamentary seat.

wong hua sehWong (left) lost to BN candidate Ding Kuong Hing from Chinese-based Sarawak United Peoples' Party (Supp) in the March 8 general election by a tissue-thin majority of 51 votes.

At the outset of the hearing in Sibul yesterday, Chin made a number of startling revelations apparently to pre-empt any possible move by the two contesting parties to disqualify him from hearing the case on the ground of non-disclosure of certain information.

The information was in two major parts - the detention of his father and brother in Sabah and the attempted interference by former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad in the judicial process.

Chin said he did not want to be construed as being prejudiced or biased after what had happened or for the counsels to later use such information against him as the presiding judge.

After revealing the explosive information, Chin had asked lawyers representing both parties whether they would seek to reclude him. They told him they would not.

Allegations of vote-buying in Sarikei

ding kuong hiingDAP's Hua Seh, who had filed the election petition, had alleged that Ding (right) and his agents, as well as a high-profile timber tycoon Ting Pek Khing, had committed bribery in the vote.

Ting shot to fame when his company Ekran won the original contract in 1993 to build the Bakun dam, the region's biggest hydroelectric project.

According to the petition, Ding and Ting had invited some 1,600 people from Bintangor and Sarikei to dinner on three occasions during the campaign period - on Feb 25 and 29 and on March 2.

sarikei parliamentary seat 100608"During the dinners, which were held at top restaurants, Ting had publicly announced that he would build the Tunku Abdul Rahman, or TAR College, if the people vote for Ding," state DAP chairperson Wong Ho Leng told reporters in Sibul when Hua Seh's election petition was lodged.

Wong also alleged that former Sarikei parliamentarian Law Hieng Ding, who attended the dinner on Feb 29, had indicated to guests that a vote for Ding would mean a vote for the college.

Ho Leng also claimed that on March 4 that Ting had committed another case of vote-buying when he told a group of about 60 people at the proposed site of the college in Bintangor that he would commence the first phase of construction as soon as Ding wins.

Ding, the BN candidate who was declared winner, later filed a notice of motion asking the court to strike out the election petition or dismiss it with costs.

The hearing continued today.

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