

Ku Li: Is he the best you can do?

Malaysiakini.com

Aug 19, 2009

Umno veteran Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah is disappointed with the party for fielding disbarred lawyer Rohaizat Othman for the upcoming Permatang Pasir by-election in Penang.

"Is Umno so short of people that we have to find a lawyer disbarred for financial dishonesty to stand?" asked the Gua Musang parliamentarian in a posting on his blog.

"Has financial misconduct become so common among us that we no longer see it as a factor in a candidate's suitability?"

The former Umno vice-president said party leaders who select and screen candidates must have known of this impediment but must have considered financial misconduct a trivial matter.

"I don't know Rohaizat. He may be a fine upstanding citizen. But his public record of dishonesty would have disqualified him from being a candidate for public office in any normal political party," he said.

Razaleigh noted that honesty is a minimal condition for public office.

"Whatever the other virtues of the candidate, he should not be considered if he fails this test," he said.

He said candidates fielded for election must have a clean record because the public are being asked to place their confidence in him as their leader, and a democratic government breaks down without public confidence.

"We are also saying this candidate represents us. I'm sad to have to say such obvious things.

"By fielding a disbarred lawyer, today's Umno is projecting the image that it lives by a different moral code from the rest of Malaysia.

"One set of rules for Umno, and another for everyone else. Either that, or this is the best we can do," he added.

Umno defends its choice

The advocates and solicitors disciplinary board struck off Rohaizat from the roll on March 7, 2008 after finding him guilty of financial misconduct.

The decision arose from an investigation into the complaint lodged against Rohaizat by the purchaser of a piece of property.

According to the complaint, Rohaizat failed to refund almost RM161,000 to the complainant after the transaction was aborted.

Rohaizat had appealed against the decision of the board to the High Court and the appeal was dismissed on Aug 12 this year.

Umno has repeatedly defended its candidate, stating that he was not involved in any fraudulent land transaction personally as a lawyer.

The party's information chief Ahmad Maslan said it was Rohaizat's legal partner who handled the matter on behalf of Koperasi Pekebun Getah Negeri Pulau Pinang Bhd.

However, this is contrary to a statement issued by the Malaysian Bar yesterday in which its secretary George Varughese said: "The finding of misconduct is personal to Rohaizat, as the (advocates and solicitors) disciplinary board would not hold a lawyer liable for the actions of his/her law partner(s)."

Come Aug 25, Rohaizat, 38, will take on Mohd Salleh, 52, for the state seat, located in the heart of the Permatang Pauh parliamentary constituency in Penang.

The Permatang Pasir seat fell vacant when three-term PAS assemblyperson Mohd Hamdan Abdul Rahman died of an illness on July 31.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.

Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/110900>