

With no voice in Umno Ku Li turns to Amanah
The Malaysian Insider
November 08, 2011
By Lee Wei Lian

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 8 — Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah said today that he joined civil society NGO Angkatan Amanah Merdeka (Amanah) as president as he finds that there is no space to voice his opinions within his political party Umno.

The Kelantan prince and the man who was once expected to be prime minister claimed that the democratic space in the ruling party has shrunk as compared with previous years.

“We don’t have space in our own parties,” said Tengku Razaleigh (picture), who is popularly known as Ku Li. “For me there is no space in Umno.”

He said that in previous years Umno members were free to say anything.

“That was what made Umno able to look after the public, not a narrow focus (like now) to look after only one segment.”

He added that he was told that to even speak in the upcoming Umno general assembly, one would have to be “approved” first.

Amanah, which was only recently formally registered with the Registrar of Societies, was formed to promote unity and inclusiveness.

Former MIC deputy president S. Subramaniam, who is Amanah deputy president, said that it would remain an NGO until members decided otherwise.

“I have a platform here to talk about issues which are hotly debated,” said Subramaniam.

Ku Li also said that he still had faith in Umno and would remain an Umno member.

The multiracial Amanah leadership comprises members from both Barisan Nasional and Pakatan Rakyat.

Among them are former MCA president and Pandan MP Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat who is a deputy president, and PAS member Wan Saiful Wan Jan, who is a vice-president.

Ong said he saw no conflict between his membership in the MCA and his leadership in Amanah as it was his right as a citizen.

Asked whether the launch of Amanah was to coincide with the 13th general election expected before 2013, Ku Li said it was just a co-incidence.

A booklet handed out on Amanah said the NGO’s mission is to reaffirm the words of Malaysia’s first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman who wanted all races to live in harmony, integrity and mutual inter-dependence and therefore build a strong nation.

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