

Rhoma Irama Denies Using Religious Sentiment In Election Campaign
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By Ahmad Fuad Yahya

JAKARTA, Aug 6 (Bernama) -- Dangdut singer and Islamic preacher, Rhoma Irama, denied that he had used racial and religious sentiments in his campaign for the Jakarta gubernatorial election recently.

In fact, the singer said the recent lecture he gave at a mosque in Tanjung Duren, West Jakarta was not a campaign for election.

"I have to stressed that what I said at the mosque was not a campaign, but a 'dakwah' (preaching of Islam). They are two different things," he told a press conference after giving his explanation on the matter to the Jakarta branch of the Election Supervisory Committee (Panwaslu) here.

Hence, he said he did not violate the SARA (ethnicity, religion, race and social relations) regulations as accused by certain quarters.

The singer said he was invited by Panwaslu today to give his explanation on his remarks during the lecture that Muslims were prohibited from voting for non-Muslim leaders.

Rhoma said he respected the pair running for Jakarta governor and deputy governor, Joko Widodo, or better known as Jokowi, and Basuki Tjahaja Purnama or Ahok, but in the context of choosing a leader, he must serve the order of Allah.

"This is not the issue of SARA. Like I said, Jokowi is a Javanese and he is a Muslim... while Ahok is a Chinese and a Christian. The people need to know who their candidates are," he said.

The second round of the gubernatorial election is scheduled for September as none of the six pairs running for governor and deputy governor achieved the 50 per cent of the total ballots in the first round.

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