

BN Keeps Bagan Datoh Seat
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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 19 (Bernama) -- The Barisan Nasional (BN) kept the Bagan Datoh parliamentary seat in Perak after the High Court today allowed a preliminary objection by its incumbent Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi on an election petition filed by Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR).

Election Court judge Hasnah Mohammed Hashim made the ruling after striking out the petition filed by PKR candidate Madhi Hassan and registered voter Azmi Sulaiman, who applied to have the result of the seat in the 13th general election declared null and void.

The court also ordered the two petitioners to pay cost amounting to RM25,000 to Ahmad Zahid, who is also the Home Minister.

In her judgement, Hasnah said both petitioners did not have sufficient facts to support allegations that Ahmad Zahid was involved in corrupt practices and contravened the law.

She said the court also found the two petitions were premature, defective and invalid.

"Ahmad Zahid had yet to be named as the candidate on April 19 last year when the allegation of corruption was made because anything that occurred before the nomination of a candidate cannot be associated with bribery," she said.

Hasnah said Madhi's allegation that Ahmad Zahid was involved in bribery by giving RM100 in cash and five bags of rice with the BN printed logo through a person known as R. Supramaniam to a person named Mustofa Saifudin, who was a registered voter in the area, was seen as not having sufficient facts to support it.

"Who is R. Supramaniam. Is he an agent for the respondent (Ahmad Zahid). It is not stated that Supramaniam was appointed as an agent to commit the alleged corrupt practice," the judge said.

She said the court also noted that Supramaniam was the BN candidate for the Hutan Melintang state seat in Perak.

"It is essential to explain the relationship of Supramaniam and whether Mustofa was influenced by the bribe to vote for him (Ahmad Zahid)," she said.

Hasnah said bribery was a serious allegation that needed to be proven beyond reasonable doubt and not on balance of probabilities.

On Azmi's allegation that Ahmad Zahid had appointed some 24,000 workers with cash payment besides giving rice to be on duty at the Bagan Datoh election, Hasnah said the petition failed to identify the intended workers or show the relationship between them and Ahmad Zahid.

Meanwhile, Madhi, who was represented by counsel Edmund Bon, when met by reporters outside the court, said he and Azmi would discuss with their counsel on whether to appeal against the election court's ruling in the next 14 days.

Ahmad Zahid, who was not present at today's proceedings, was represented by a panel of counsel led by Datuk Mohd Hafarizam Harun.

On Dec 23 last year, the Federal Court had ruled that the election petition filed by the two petitioners be remitted back to the Election Court to hear the merits of the case after allowing an appeal on the election petition filed by PKR.

PKR filed the appeal to the Federal Court following the decision of the Election Court in Ipoh to reject the election petition.

Ahmad Zahid garnered a 2,108-majority vote in defeating Madhi in that contest.

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