

Ku Li: Reforms first, polls later

Written by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah
Tuesday, 08 November 2011 00:00 -

Amanah chief says the PSC must be allowed to complete its task and all relevant laws amended and implemented before the general election

KUALA LUMPUR: The government should reform the electoral system first before calling for the general election, Umno stalwart and Angkatan Amanah Merdeka (Amanah) president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah said today.

“We welcome the government’s decision to set up the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC). The government must take in all views, including those before Bersih and after, to ensure a free and fair election,” Razaleigh told a press conference at his residence here.

He said that the PSC should be allowed to complete its task expeditiously and all relevant laws amended appropriately and put in place before the general election is called.

Razaleigh, or better known as Ku Li, said that the Bersih 2.0 mass rally on July 9 need not have happened if the government had responded properly.

“I had passed a message to the government asking them to meet with the organisers. What happened was unfortunate; people came out in the thousands despite threats, and it was a mixed crowd too...,” Razaleigh said.

The group’s deputy president Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir added: “There’s talk as if election is going to be held tomorrow. We think the election should be held after PSC has completed its task and its recommendations implemented. Otherwise, there’s no meaning.

“If they hold elections before the PSC had done its job, then it’s like main-main saja (not serious). It’s just drama, and that’s not so nice. We would have preferred a royal commission to look into electoral reforms. The government should be sincere,” said Abdul Kadir, the former

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tourism minister.

He said that the government is now aware that “these are changed times” and the sovereignty of the people should be respected and taken into account.

He also said that Amanah supported Hulu Selangor MP P Kamalanathan’s suggestion that there should be a “neutral caretaker” government once the government is dissolved for election.

Razaleigh’s call today came amid speculation that Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak would dissolve the Parliament this Friday (Nov 11), with the general election due to be held on Dec 13.

On speculations that Amanah was planning on becoming a new political party, Razaleigh said that it was formed as an NGO, but did not rule out the possibility of it evolving in future.

Razaleigh also revealed that Amanah was officially approved by the Registrar of Societies two weeks ago. “We’re now in business,” he said. “Although many have suggested that Amanah be converted to a political organisation, it was not thought up that way. It will remain a NGO as announced at the launch,” he said.

However, he denied any intention to leave Umno, saying: “If I wanted to, I would have said so. Why waste time? BN needs every bit of help to make sure it does well in the general election,” he said.

‘English second most important language’

Describing Amanah as being in the “middle” of the political spectrum, he did not rule out the possibility of its members contesting in the general election.

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“Is there a possibility? I’m not saying yes, I’m not saying no... we can’t write off any possibilities,” he said.

Razaleigh added that Amanah would continue to voice out and work on social, economic and political activities that “we think will help the people”.

He also said that Amanah will be launching several “people-oriented” initiatives soon.

He said that a serious reform of the education system was needed, but did not state Amanah’s stand on the teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics in English.

“English is a very important subject. If you go back to the Razak report, you will see that English is supposed to be the second (most important) language.

“But we have neglected the English part of the policy which was espoused in 1956. In the Hulu Kelantan area, all the students failed because of English.

“I welcome teaching Science and Mathematics in English, but how do you do it if you don’t have any (competent) teachers?”

Razaleigh also lamented the fact that within BN, there has been less space to voice views and said that the time was ripe for the freedom during Tun Razak’s time to be revived through Amanah.

“We are free. We do not support nor are we against the government. Not mengampu (butter up). We speak according to our conscience,” he said, adding that even Pakatan Rakyat leaders are open to joining Amanah.

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“Why use an NGO? Because there’s a ‘GO’ in the word NGO, there is no ‘go’ elsewhere.” But asked if this means he does not have confidence in his own party, Ku Li said: “No, because I’m still in my party, but now we have more space to speak.”

Asked if the government would listen to Amanah since its leaders are “no longer in the top echelon”, Razaleigh said that if the government would not listen, the people would.

Also present at the Amanah press conference were former MCA president Ong Tee Keat and former MIC deputy president S Subramaniam.

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