

## **NO PLACE IN SOCIETY FOR GUTTER POLITICS, 21 OCT 2011**

Penang Forum is utterly disgusted at the lack of ethics of bloggers who have made serious accusations which implicates the child of a well known politician in Penang. This was followed by politicians from certain parties who fueled the situation with their insensitive comments. It was disgraceful that a politician who is supposed to be well educated twittered on the situation using sexual innuendo like “Kampung Buah Dada”!

It is a shame that Malaysians are witnessing such appallingly low depths of political tactics. The school-going child of the politician concerned has been made a victim of this on-going political game. Not only were these accusations false but also hurtful and damaging to the child and the family.

Politicians and the media involved in this dishonourable episode must recognize and understand that they have totally disregarded the country’s law to protect and uphold the rights of the child by their unethical reporting and on-going coverage. The Child Act 2001 stipulates that every child is entitled to protection and assistance in all circumstances. Given this, media coverage of a child should always consider the child’s physical, mental and emotional well-being. The identity of the child in any reporting should be protected when there is a possibility of damage caused to the child by the report. Furthermore, the actions of the media in this instance have also contravened Article 16 (Protection of Privacy) of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child to which Malaysia is a signatory. No child should be subjected to libel or slander.

In a democratic country, it is expected that politicians would disagree. However, Malaysians would expect a level of maturity and intelligence to ensure that disagreements are fairly fought and with decency. Smearing the reputation of a school-going child only shows the desperation of those who are bankrupt of ideas in political strategy. It is fast becoming the norm for Malaysian politicians to use such tactics for political mileage. This is totally unacceptable.

Penang Forum strongly reiterates that there is no place in our society for gutter politics. We look to the day where we can be proud of the level of intelligent debate and coverage from local bloggers and politicians. It is obvious that we still have a long way to go.

***Loh Cheng Kooi***

***On behalf of Penang Forum***