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Gerakan, MCA ties `will improve'

PENANG, Wed. - Certain that the current strain between the Gerakan and MCA in Penang would ease over time, State Barisan Nasional chairman Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon today gave his word that steps would be taken to mend broken fences for the good of the State.

The Chief Minister, who said he was "personally saddened" with the departure of Penang MCA chairman Datuk Dr Sak Cheng Lum from the State Government, thanked the former State Trade, Commerce and Consumer Affairs Committee chairman for his contributions in the previous State Executive Council.

Koh told a Press conference: "I am sure it (Gerakan-MCA ties) will improve and recover ... it may take some time, though."

Dr Sak, Koh added, had asked not to be included in the new Exco line-up.

"This is a decision reached by the MCA which was conveyed to me. I discussed the matter with Dr Sak over the phone at midnight yesterday and we also met on Monday and had a long discussion."

Dr Sak said today that he did not want to be included in the new State Executive Council "as a matter of principle".

"As a man of principle, and as a matter of principle, I decided not to be included in the Exco line-up," said Dr Sak, who expressed his disappointment over the BN leadership's failure to accommodate the State MCA's request for more responsibility and representation in the State Government.

But like Koh, Dr Sak also said that through time, the strained relationship between the two BN component parties would improve.

On co-operation with Koh and Gerakan, Dr Sak said the MCA was willing to work together, "provided that co-operation and respect is reciprocated, as the MCA does not want to be taken for granted".

"As we feel this episode is over now, we have directed the two executive councillors from the party (Datuk Koay Kar Huah and Dr Loh Hock Hun) to play an active role to ensure Penang's continued prosperity," he said.

Expressing his respect and appreciation to the national BN leadership - especially to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi - for the manner in which all component parties co-operated and came to a consensus on the formation of the new Exco, Koh said: "I wish to advise all component parties including Gerakan to subscribe and adhere to the BN spirit that all matters should be settled through proper channels."

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