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KOH TSU KOON TO BE SWORN IN AS PULAU PINANG CHIEF MINISTER ON MONDAY

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 4 (Bernama) -- Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said today that he will be sworn in as Pulau Pinang Chief Minister on Monday.

Dr Koh, who is Gerakan vice president, said that he received his letter of appointment from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Thursday.

"I received my letter of appointment when I called on Dr Mahathir in Langkawi on Dec 2," he told a news conference at the party headquarters, here.

Dr Koh said that he would call on Pulau Pinang Yang Di Pertua Negeri Tun Dr Hamdan Sheikh Tahir to inform him of his appointment.

Dr Koh assumed the post after the 1990 general election.

Dr Koh, 50, said that during his meeting with the prime minister on Thursday, Dr Mahathir had advised him to be patient following the move by two Pulau Pinang state assemblymen to leave the party on Thursday.

State Assemblyman for Datuk Keramat Lim Boo Chang and State Assemblyman for Bayan Lepas Lim Chien Aun, in quitting the party, among other things, alleged that the Pulau Pinang leadership "is of extreme poor quality".

Dr Koh said that Dr Mahathir and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had asked him to proceed with the swearing-in ceremony on Monday.

He said that he would be taking his oath of office on that day while others to be appointed as state executive councillors would be sworn in within a day or two.

Discussion on the new exco-line-up was still going on, he said.

Dr Koh thanked Dr Mahathir and Abdullah for placing their trust in him to continue to assume the post.

He said that he would give his best in further developing the state besides working closely with all the component parties of the Barisan Nasional.

Pulau Pinang, he said, had achieved much progress during the nine years of his tenure, with a growth rate exceeding 10 per cent and this would be further enhanced to benefit the people in the state.

He said his duty as chief minister was to ensure that all development programmes being planned could proceed, while within the party, his challenge was to reunite the members and to attract more people to become members.

On whether his reappointment would be opposed by the MCA which has nine seats compared to the eight held by the Gerakan following the move of the two newly-elected state assemblymen to leave the party, Dr Koh said that the matter would not arise as his appointment was made by Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman.

"All BN component parties should respect the decision in the spirit of camaraderie practised by the party," he said.

Citing an example, he said that in the 1990 general election, the Gerakan only won seven state seats while Umno won 12 but in the spirit of camaraderie, the chief minister's post was given to him.

Asked to comment on the criticisms hurled against him by the duo, Koh said: "I'm prepared to accept constructive criticisms because I'm only human and I'm not perfect and certainly have shortcomings".

However, Dr Koh said that the people of Pulau Pinang had endorsed the developments implemented by the state government under the BN which won 30

of the 33 state seats in the just-concluded 10th general election.

In the election, Gerakan won 10 seats, Umno 10 seats, MCA nine seats and MIC one seat. The DAP, Keadilan and PAS won one seat each.

Also present at the news conference were Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik and all seven Gerakan state assemblumen and two Members of Parliament from the state.

The seven are Dr Teng Hock Nan (Kebun Bunga), Datuk Kee Phaik Cheen (Batu Uban), Teng Chang Yeow (Padang Kota), Datuk Dr Toh Kin Woon (Machang Bubuk), Ng Siew Lai (Bukit Tengah), Lai Chew Hock (Sungai Bakap) and Looi Swee Cheang (Sungai Pinang).

The two MPs are Chia Kwang Chye (Bukit Bendera) and Lee Kah Choon (Jelutong).

-- BERNAMA

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