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Gerakan upbeat about outcome of its recent delegates' conference

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THE Barisan Nasional formula of power sharing has worked very well and Parti Gerakan fully accepts this, says its secretary-general Chia Kwang Chye.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's recent reminder that no one can have everything was highly relevant.

On the Penang Chief Minister's post, Chia said no party can lay claim to it without the support of other parties in the BN.

The Gerakan, he said, knows where it is heading and is fully committed to its ideals.

"We will have to convince others to accept the multi-racial character of our party and our non-racial approach of solving problems," he said.

Malaysians, he said, needed to understand diverse beliefs and practices, as well as to learn how to give and take.

Chia also dismissed allegations by critics of Gerakan that the party was merely paying lip service to the multi-racial cause.

He said the party hoped to attract more diverse ethnic groups to its fold in the near future.

Chia refuted allegations that non-Chinese were turned away at Gerakan service centres.

"If this is true, it must have been an isolated incident. It certainly won't happen in my constituency of Bukit Bendera. Anyone being turned away should bring it up to party headquarters. We do not condone such behaviour," he said.

He also clarified news reports which quoted the party's national youth leader Teng Chang Yeow as saying that the movement was prepared to work with the Opposition in seeking amendments to the Universities and University Colleges Act.

"There is no need to work with the Opposition as it will never support anything brought up by the Barisan," he said.

Regarding the two State seats of Datuk Keramat now held by Lim Boo Chang and Bayan Lepas currently held by Lim Chien Aun, Chia said there was no need for Gerakan to demand them.

"The seats belong to Gerakan and we are still serving the constituents, no question about it," he said.

There was still anger among the delegates at the way the two Lims quit the party to join MCA just three days after the election results were announced.

He recalled that a few years ago when Khoo Boo Yeang left Gerakan to join the MCA, his Tanjung Bunga seat was given back to Gerakan in the next election.

"While some members may sway or deviate, the leadership is firm on where the party is headed," he said.

On the departure of veterans such as Datuk Lim Ee Heong, Datuk Tan Gim Hwa and Datuk Dr Goh Cheng Teik who were openly critical of the party, Chia said there was "less diversions now".

"We are mindful of the contributions of the old guard and we recognise their worth. The old guard is no problem to us," he said.

Chia also hit out at "anonymous" Internet critics who called for the removal of Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon over various issues ranging from the repeal of the Rent Control Act to non-implementation of certain projects.

He said there seemed to be a concerted effort by certain groups acting solely for their own interests.

"We run the Government together, so don't run away and leave the leader. This is highly irresponsible," he said.

Chia was upbeat about the recent National Delegates Conference and described delegates as "motivated and having high expectations".

The quality of the debate, he said, improved tremendously and among those who spoke was a significant number of non-Chinese.

He said the party would continue to motivate members at all levels and planned to expand and recruit more members to support the Barisan in serving the people.

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