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Gerakan chief Keng Yaik throws weight behind Kerk

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said today that he fully supported his deputy Datuk Seri Kerk Choo Ting in his bid to defend his post during the party election on Saturday.

Dr Lim said Kerk, who has been holding the post for the past 14 years, was a veteran and experienced party leader and his presence was still needed as he could help strengthen Gerakan.

"I fully support Kerk in his bid to defend his post. Some quarters claim that I have not endorsed Kerk openly and that is why I am stating my stand now."

Dr Lim, who is also Primary Industries Minister, was speaking at a Press conference at his ministry today.

He said he and the other party leaders had tried their best to persuade Kerk's challenger, Siew Kok Kan, who is the Kuala Sepetang Assemblyman and central committee member, to withdraw.

"However, Siew seems to be determined to contest the post. There is still two days more before election and it is up to him to decide."

He said some 1,800 delegates were expected to attend the two-day assembly starting from Saturday which would be officiated at by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Dr Lim was returned unopposed as the party president during nomination day last Saturday.

There will not be any contest for the three vice-presidents' posts as they have been returned unopposed. The three are Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, Dr Tan Kee Kwong and Datuk Dr S. Vijayarajam.

Dr Lim said that of the 28 candidates nominated for the 18 central committee posts, 10 had withdrawn.

As for the Youth election tomorrow, he said there would not be any contest.

Deputy head Mah Siew Kong was returned unopposed after his challenger, Kek Guan Chuan, withdrew.

On the Wanita election, its head Datuk Kee Phaik Cheen would be challenged by her deputy Datuk Rhina Bharr while 15 candidates are vying for the 12 Wanita central committee posts.

Dr Lim said that he would not interfere in the election and let the Wanita delegates elect the candidate they believe could serve them best.