

19/10/2003

Lim to remain president at Gerakan's behest

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said he would stay on as Gerakan president as party leaders wanted him to.

"I will try hard to serve the party. But I (also) do not want to work till I die," he said after the party's monthly central committee meeting here, today.

Dr Lim, the Gerakan president since 1980, said the decision to stay on was not his but that of other party leaders who had expressed their wish for him to continue.

On when he would step down, Dr Lim said: "It might be another 50 years, 20 years or another two years. I don't know. You have to ask them.

"I asked the central committee to let me quit two years ago but was told to stay on. It is not an issue because we have no problem in the party. The party is very stable."

Earlier, deputy president Datuk Kerk Choo Ting announced that the central committee had expressed full confidence in Dr Lim's leadership and wanted him to continue serving the party.

"His leadership is still needed by the party and country," he said.

According to Kerk, Dr Lim was not present when the central committee discussed his leadership.

Dr Lim had always maintained that he would step down when the time was right and when party members no longer needed him.

On Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's call for veteran Barisan Nasional politicians to step down for new leaders, Dr Lim said politicians had to assess their usefulness to their parties before deciding on the matter.

He said they had also to assess the need for them to stay on.

On Thursday, Gerakan Youth too called for Dr Lim to continue as president.

In a statement by Youth chief Mah Siew Keong, the movement said Dr Lim's leadership was needed by the party and that was why the president had, in the past, been asked to retract his decision to resign.

On another matter, Dr Lim said the party had postponed its branch and divisional elections, scheduled to begin in March, until after the next general election.

On the party's election machinery's state of preparedness, Dr Lim said the party was identifying ways to counter issues raised by the Opposition, particularly DAP's opposition to Malaysia being declared an Islamic country.

He said the election task force, which he headed, would tour the country to explain issues to party members and the people.