

'Koh must be courageous and contest in Penang'
Malaysiakini.com
October 14 ,2011
By Susan Loone

Gerakan leaders must have the courage to go to the toughest seats and face uphill battles if the party wants to reclaim its dignity.

The party's central committee member Dr Cheah Soon Hai said the leaders must be able to make sacrifices, not merely target safe seats to contest in the 13th general election.

NONEMany, he said, want Gerakan president Koh Tsu Koon to contest in Penang because it would be a very challenging battle, and an opportunity as well to show that Gerakan still has its fighting spirit.

"We must show that we are willing to face the battles by going to the toughest seats," Cheah (left) told Malaysiakini today.

"I give my full support to the leadership to take up more seats in Penang and give up some seats in the other states. We need to show that we have the fighting spirit," he added.

Cheah's comments come in the wake of calls - ahead of Gerakan's national delegates conference this weekend - for Koh to step down and pave the way for "a more capable leader" to take charge of the party in the coming general election.

The election, which is not due until 2013 and seen as very critical for both BN and Pakatan Rakyat, may be called as early as next month or in the early part of next year.

Gerakan suffered its worst defeat in the 2008 general election, losing its stronghold of Penang and prompting calls for Koh not to contest in the next election as he is seen as a liability.

Group does not want Koh to contest

A group opposing Koh, which originated in Perak and is backed by several members in Penang, is said to have had several meetings in Penang since Monday.

The group, said to be backed by party adviser Dr Lim Keng Yaik, wants Koh to give up his presidency, as well as decline any seat offered to him in the next general election.

NONESome members are kinder, in that they have asked Koh to forgo a seat in Penang and opt for a safer one in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur.

Koh, who is a senator and federal minister, has brushed aside the quit calls and remained tight-lipped on which constituency he would contest in the coming general election - or whether he would contest at all.

He has said he would clarify the matter in due course, probably in about a month after the delegates congress.

Cheah said the party has to find the best strategy to perform better in the election, for it was now at the crossroads.

"Winning or losing a seat may not be as important as having the courage to face the battle," Cheah said. "We can put up the best candidates and give the best performance and at least, we can bring some dignity back to the party."

'Not true Keng Yaik is behind group'

These issues, he added, would be raised at today's central committee meeting because the members want new direction at the delegates conference, a direction that would benefit the party and not individuals.

State Gerakan chief Dr Teng Hock Nan when contacted rubbished the claims that Lim was behind the group seeking to oust Koh.

The former Penang state executive councillor said Gerakan leaders know this to be untrue and that it was being played up by the media.

"Koh is not pressured, but there are concerns within the party about the current political situation and certain moves to handle this situation have been suggested by various groups," Teng said.

"These alternative strategies to handle the political situation are not just for Koh but for all leaders to consider," added the former Pulau Tikus assemblyperson.

Teng, who is also a Gerakan vice-president, denied that these issues would be highlighted at today's CEC meeting, saying it was something "everyone already knows about".

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/178639>