

Anti-Koh sentiment fizzles out
Malaysiakini.com
October 16, 2011
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Voices critical of Gerakan president Koh Tsu Koon was largely absent in during the party's 40th national delegates conference which came to a close today.

Anti-Koh sentiments were heavily reported over the past two weeks but for one fiery speech by Wanita chief, delegates who took the floor were mostly supportive of the president.

gerakan ndc 161011 koh tsu koon tan lian hoeln her policy speech yesterday, Tan (centre) lashed out at Koh for his apparent weak and indecisive leadership, without naming him.

She made it clearer during a press conference immediately after that she was referring to Koh and said that he should step down unless he could improve.

However, Tan made a stunning U-turn today when winding up the delegate's debate on Koh's policy speech, declaring that she would support all of the president's decisions.

"Whatever the decision that would be made by the leadership, especially by the president. I, together with all our comrades, will stand together and support the president," she said.

Tan changes tune

After delivering her winding up speech, Tan approached a seated Koh to shake his hand, prompting cheers from the floor.

Permanent chairperson Chin Fook Weng remarked to the delegates that the flare up yesterday was now no longer an issue.

"This episode of misunderstanding has come to a close. There is no need to pursue this matter further... for the sake of party unity,"

koh tsu koonTan was then mobbed by reporters after she stepped off the stage and said that her criticism in her policy speech was directed at the party leadership at all levels, rather than it just being aimed at Koh (left).

When pointed out that she had explicitly said that Koh was unable to make tough decisions, Tan appeared lost for words repeatedly replied: "My speech is very clear".

Asked if Koh decides to contest in the next general election, Tan said: "I just want him to make decisions... Yes, I would support him (if he seeks to contest)."

Influenced by delegates

Overwhelmed by the mob of reporters and questions, Tan was whisked away by two bodyguards.

Throughout the three day congress, Tan's policy speech which attacked Koh did not gain much traction with the delegates and instead earned her some mild criticism.

penang gerakan egm 101010 teng chang yeowParty secretary-general Teng Chang Yeow (right) told Malaysiakini that the central working committee made absolutely no attempts to reprimand Tan over the speech and had no role in her change of heart.

"Probably it was the delegates that influenced her and told her that it was out of the line to say such things at this juncture where there are many channels to do so," he said.

Teng speculates that Tan may have been trying to voice out public perception against Koh but delegates don't think this is the proper forum to do so.

"But for the central delegates, they do not want party leaders to wash dirty linen in public. Most of the delegates felt that it is out of the line and that she should not have done that," he said.

Delegates want 'hard' president

Several party delegates had yesterday called on Koh to be courageous and take action that would motivate the party, particularly contesting in Penang, which is now controlled by arch-rival DAP.

Mah siew keong Party vice-president Mah Siew Keong (right) in his winding up speech said delegates cannot be too quick to judge the president's decision making abilities, which he described involves either a "soft" or "hard" approach.

"You guys don't be dirty minded, but I want to say that the president can be soft or hard... Do you want a hard president?" asked Mah, to which the floor burst out in wild applause.

"So the president must be hard more often!" said Mah while pointing at Koh.

Responding to criticisms on election preparations, Koh in his winding up speech urged the grassroots to be patient as potential candidates were still being scrutinised.

"Hey, my friend, if you are already (appointed) the (election) coordinator, you already have half a foot inside the door. If you don't do well and if we cut you, don't blame us.

"But we will be fair. We will be as fair and open minded as possible. But when we make the decision we want it to be accepted with an open heart. Okay? No clap?" he said.

Emulate PAS' and DAP's fighting spirit

On his perceived docile demeanour, Koh reminded delegates that he was no stranger to a keen contest and had weathered through two tough challenges in Penang in form of DAP's Tanjung 1 and Tanjung 3 campaign.

He said that he had faced off with DAP supremo before for the Tanjung seat and he was not afraid of taking on heavyweights in the general election.

Koh acknowledged that the party was going into an election with a low morale and reminded grassroots that the party began as an opposition party who fought their way into becoming a ruling party.

Giving credit to DAP and PAS, he said these who parties were once in the wilderness and Gerakan should emulate their perseverance.

"I may not agree with DAP and PAS, but their fighting spirit is strong. I believe Gerakan can do better," he said.

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