

Kedah Gerakan strongman quits over 'incapable' Koh
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By Susan Loone

A Gerakan strongman from Kedah has submitted his resignation due to party president Koh Tsu Koon's inability to effect reforms within the party and government.

gerakan return to speaker corner 311010 tang hiang lyeThe party's Kedah organising secretary and Padang Serai division chief Tang Hiang Lye (left) said he will submit his resignation letter to the party's headquarters tonight.

He said that although Gerakan had suffered a major setback during the 2008 polls, its contributions to Penang were numerous.

"Gerakan is not a lousy party... I do not want to criticise the party but unfortunately our president loves himself too much and cannot bring reform to the party and government," Tang said during a press conference today.

"He is out of touch with the needs of the people. When proposals come from members, he will offer a lot of excuses to avoid carrying out any reforms," he added.

"This is not sour grapes nor am I an opportunist who wants something from the party," added the 20-year member, obviously upset with Koh.

Koh's leadership had received a battering, even from party leaders and members, since Gerakan's worst defeat in the 2008 general election when Pakatan Rakyat, led by DAP, seized the state government.

At the party's recent National Delegates Conference (NDC), Koh was criticised for his poor leadership, while the federal minister declared that he was willing to sacrifice himself for the benefit of the party.

Tang reminded the party that he was the one who first rebuked Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng for attacking Gerakan, other than state youth vice-chief Tan Kah Leong.

He said other leaders remained afraid and silent during the period. He added that members were aware of Koh's weaknesses and offered their help to "whiten and purify" his name by writing articles and presenting speeches at various events.

This was to reclaim Koh's dignity and redress various misunderstandings surrounding the former chief minister, he stressed.

"However, after three years, I feel betrayed by him and have no choice but to leave," he said.

Slow down, reformists advised

Tang advised "radical reformists" within the party to slow down so that Koh can catch up with them as he moves at a snail-like pace.

"You need to follow their pace and not overtake them. Otherwise, they will label you as a threat and turn around to bite you," he said, adding that such a slow pace has suffocated many within the party.

Tang said Gerakan does not lack reformists, but this group would eventually feel let down by the

leadership's performance.

He added that the party used to set up independent committee to collect public feedback but nothing would be done after submitting a report to the leadership.

"We feel sad when eventually some of the proposals we submitted were adopted instead by the opposition," said Tang.

Meanwhile, Tang is also sore about Koh's failure to reform the National Voluntary Security Team (NVST), an NGO which usually operates within residential areas, and is reportedly suffering "a chaotic situation".

Tang, who is pro-tem president of the NGO, had submitted a proposal to Koh to help improve the team as it may turn into a "secret society" if it continues to be ignored.

He wants Koh to help seek legal status for the team as it is considered illegal and members are asked to join the existing Rukun Tetangga.

"Koh used to recognise our role in improving the security of the area and had met with the police and home minister to carry out the reforms, and the latter has given him the power to carry out changes," he claimed.

"Ultimately, our proposal was shot down as he is afraid that this might anger certain groups within the National Unity and Integration Department, which runs the Rukun Tetangga," he said.

"He gave me this answer through the phone. I am so disappointed that he held back the reforms just for that reason alone," lamented Tang, who said he had shelved his decision to leave the party before the NDC to minimise the damage.

Tang said since he could not bring changes within the party, he has no choice but to quit and render his services to an NGO.

Tang, who said he has no intentions to hurt Gerakan with his departure, said he has made his final decision and would not be persuaded by Koh or other leaders to remain within the party.

"If he is willing to step down within the next two months and hand over the party's leadership to someone who can reform, then I will consider rejoining Gerakan but I do not think he will do so," he quipped.

"I am not lobbying for anyone to leave with me but I heard a group will leave the party in the next two months," he said.

"Koh and I are still friends. If he respects me, please look into my proposals and I am willing to meet him to discuss matters," he added