

Koh's 'sacrifice' creating choppy waves in Gerakan
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Gerakan secretary-general Teng Chang Yeow has urged party insiders not to create problems within the party by leaking information to the public.

According to him, Gerakan members have the tendency to pass on information to the press and this could sow discord within the party's ranks.

Tan Lian Hoe, Gerakan Wanita Chief AGM 2011, said that there were proper channels for members to raise their issues such as the central committee leadership and state meetings.

The Gerakan leader has also vowed not to respond to issues brought up by the press about the party's internal problems.

"I will not respond. It is like talking to the wall. Why should I respond to the wall?" he queried.

Teng was nevertheless responding to a front-page report in Chinese language Sin Chew Daily headlined 'Koh (Tsu Koon) expected not to contest (in the coming polls) as sacrifice'.

Koh, who is Gerakan president, had declared that he was ready to sacrifice himself for the party in last weekend's national delegates conference in Kuala Lumpur.

Quoting sources, the Sin Chew report stated that Koh would pave the way for state vice-chief Ong Thean Lye and national secretary-general Teng to lead the battle in Penang.

This included a package where state party chief Teng Hock Nan (right) and his arch rival, former Bukit Bendera MP, are to opt out from contesting in the election.

The chances of old guards in Penang winning are rather low, said the report, and the rationale for the 'package' is to help prevent the on-going factional fight between the two camps.

Young leaders are too eager

Teng, who is a former Padang Kota assembly person, lamented that young politicians were at times too eager and their actions could affect the party.

Some have their own political agenda as a change in leadership could affect their positions and chances of contesting in the polls, he added.

"We all think differently, but when the leadership decides, we follow. I wait for the party to decide, then act as instructed," he told Malaysiakini yesterday.

He added that the Penang party leaders had been making efforts to reach out to the grassroots by working with other component parties, mainly Umno, MCA and People's Progressive Party (PPP).

"I urge them not to stir unnecessary misunderstandings inside Gerakan. The Penang team is doing pretty well so far," added the former state executive council member.

Chia Kwang Chye, interview 290806, pointed out it is learnt that Chia (left), a former parliamentary secretary, has not given up his hope to contest in Penang, but this has been opposed by his rival, Hock Nan.

It is said that Hock Nan has agreed to retire from politics but only if Chia refrains from contesting in the election, the Sin Chew report said.

This has put Koh in a dilemma, which could lead to 'sacrificing' himself so that the duo (Chia and Hock Nan) would follow suit, and the party's transformation would then be handed to the younger generation.

On the other hand, Koh has also been challenged to contest in Penang to reclaim the party's dignity and fire up the fighting spirit among members as they prepare for the polls.

Unhappy with Teng's return to Penang

The polls may be called as early as next month or early next year, but it is not due until March 2013.

Ong and Teng are expected to contest in their former seats - Padang Kota and Sungai Pinang - respectively.

Although, several Umno and Gerakan leaders are not too happy with Teng's move as he is seldom seen in state BN or party functions, this would not affect the former state exco's chances of contesting in the polls.

Teng said he had never left Penang as his home is located in the state, and he had attended state party events from time to time.

He added that he is mostly pre-occupied with his role as party's secretary-general to ensure good ties with other BN component parties.

Teng however appeared to have reservations on returning to contest in his former constituency, saying that his voters had already made their choice in 2008. But he added he would consider the matter if asked to do so by the party's leadership.

Meanwhile, Ong denied that the party veteran leaders including Koh, would refrain from contesting the polls, saying that the situation in the party remained fluid.

He said there were various views and proposals on the matter, and the party leaders were aware of such comments, both within and outside the party.

Ong declined to comment on the proposal that he would team up with Teng (Chang Yeow) to lead Gerakan into battle in Penang.

"But if you are referring to the polls, then we need to take the feedback and approval of our party and voters into consideration," said Ong, who is Koh's political secretary.

Prime Minister Najib Razak's had argued that those contesting in the next polls should be winnable candidates.

On whether younger candidates should lead the elections, Ong said that other leaders were also necessary as "incapable and inexperienced" ones may not be able to perform well.