

Teng Chang Yeow ready to lead Penang BN
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by Susan Loone

Penang Gerakan appears to be prepared to continue the struggle when the party's president Koh Tsu Koon gives up his post as state Barisan Nasional chairperson.

Gerakan secretary-general Teng Chang Yeow (right in photo) said Koh had met him twice over the matter and he has expressed his agreement to pick up the baton.

"I have told the president when we met twice over this that I am prepared and willing to take on the challenge (to lead Penang BN)," Teng told Malaysiakini.

"Koh is also aware of the the various feedback from the grassroots when he decided to give up his post," he added.

However, Teng said the appointment of a new state BN chief will be done at the federal level, and in the hands of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

"It is now up to Najib (to appoint someone if Koh resigns) and we are not sure if Koh had raised this issue with him or not," he added. However, Teng, a former state executive councillor, said he was uncertain when Koh would make the announcement to quit the post.

Teng, who is former Padang Kota assemblyperson, is also unable to confirm if Koh would drop the bombshell before or after the 13th general election.

All parties are gearing up for the polls, which could be called by the end of the year or in the first quarter of next year, although it is not due until 2013.

But all of Malaysia was in an expectant mood yesterday when speculation was rife that Najib would dissolve Parliament today, and call for elections on Dec 10.

Teng was responding to Koh's statement yesterday that he was ready to give up the BN chairmanship to a person who is acceptable to other BN component parties.

Ball is in Najib's court

Koh, who is former Penang chief minister, said the appointment of the state BN chairperson was the right of Najib, who is also BN chairperson.

He added that it would be a process of consultation, which only meant that the announcement may not come as soon as his critics expect.

The federal minister has been taunted by several quarters, including members of his own and other component party members, to relinquish his posts to make way for younger leaders.

Datuk Zainal Abidin Osman, penang umno chief Meanwhile, when contacted, state Umno liaison committee chairperson Zainal Abidin Osman (left) declined to comment over Koh's statement.

He merely said via an sms that "I will call you to comment once the announcement is made".

But a party source said that Zainal has told his people two weeks ago that Koh will make a big announcement.

"However, nothing has happened yet and Zainal is still waiting," added the source.

It is learnt that Koh will announce his resignation as Penang BN chief within the next few days, and also retire from politics, which may be unlikely, but he would probably pull out from the coming election.

'State BN chief has to get Umno's blessing'

In an immediate response, Komtar assemblyperson Ng Wei Aik said that it makes no difference who leads Penang, whether it is a BN or Gerakan leader.

He explained that this is due to the fact that a state BN chief has to get the blessings of Umno, since he or she will be appointed and decided on by Najib.

"The chosen one would have to abide by Umno's rules, they would have to subscribe to Umno's wishes or else they would not be selected," said Ng, who is also political secretary to the Penang chief minister.

"So do not be misled that Gerakan or BN in Penang would change overnight just because they have a new chairperson," he warned the public.

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