

Koh vows not to bow out as party chief

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by Susan Loone

Gerakan president Koh Tsu Koon has dismissed former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad's call for him to quit his party post for failing as a leader.

Koh, who is Penang BN chief, said Malaysia is a democratic country and Mahathir was entitled to his views.

However, whether he quits his party post or continues to lead the Gerakan is the party's internal affair, said Koh.

"We know what we are doing and what to do. Thank you for your concern," he told the ex-premier, when asked to comment after attending a function at the Wawasan University in Penang today.

"In fact, for me to step down would be the easy way out. In a sense, I would be relieved of all my responsibilities if I let go," he added.

But, Koh (right, holding file) said that he felt responsible and cannot leave his comrades at this juncture with the 13th general election looming large.

He added that his party leaders - deputy and vice-presidents - are working very hard to prepare themselves for contesting in their respective constituencies to be burdened with extra workload, should he resign.

Willing to 'swallow dead cats'

"I would rather take on the tasks myself and go around doing the work. I will take all the bullets and swallow dead cats from the CAT (Competency, Accountability, Transparency) government," he punned.

"I will take all this and to relinquish is the easy way out," he added.

Yesterday, Mahathir suggested that Koh quit his Gerakan president's post for failing to lead his party properly.

He said a leader must step down after a major failure, as Abdullah Ahmad Badawi did as BN chief after the 2008 general election.

Mahathir added that Koh is seen as a liability to Gerakan and the BN and should immediately give way to others.

Many, especially Gerakan grassroot members are expecting Koh to step down as Penang BN chief today, after months of speculation and his own proclaimed willingness to hand over the baton to someone acceptable to BN coalition partners.

It is widely believed that Gerakan secretary-general Teng Chang Yeow would be installed as the new state BN chief, after Prime Minister and BN national chairperson Najib Abdul Razak endorsed his

candidature on Tuesday.

Disappointment with Koh

Teng, who is a former Penang state executive councillor and ex-Padang Kota assemblyperson, had said he was prepared to take up the challenge to lead Penang in the coming general election.

Party members were disappointed when on Thursday Koh merely announced that he would not contest in the coming general election, expected to be called early next year but not due until 2013.

In an immediate response, Geraklah Gerakan - a pressure group within the party - has called for an end to "eunuch" politics.

Its spokesperson Yeap Ban Choon said after the wipe-out, the party structure must be reformed for the coming GE13.

Meanwhile, the Gerakan central working committee held a two-and-a-half hour meeting at the Wawasan University premises today.

However, Koh did not make the much anticipated announcement of his resignation as BN chief, and pass on the leadership to Teng.

When asked by reporters after the meeting, Koh said the meeting discussed "national issues and strategies".

On being pressed further, he said: "I have said all I wanted to say at this morning's press conference".

On quitting his state BN chief post, Koh said: "We will follow procedures".

Koh was referring to Article 23(2) of the BN constitution which states that it is the prerogative of the BN supreme council chairperson to appoint state BN chairpersons.