

'Homeless' Jui Meng backs Kit Siang

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By Nigel Aw

"Long time no see and long time no hear" - those were the first words uttered by Johor PKR chief Chua Jui Meng who had vanished from the radar screen for over a fortnight after PKR surrendered the Gelang Patah parliamentary seat to DAP.

Breaking his silence today, Chua pledged support for DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang (left) despite the latter having taken over his parliamentary seat Chua was said to be eyeing - resulting in him now being "homeless".

"Gelang Patah is highly winnable and I am honoured that the person who is taking over from me is Lim Kit Siang.

"He is a man of integrity, honour and has persisted in the struggle for change in this country," Chua told a press conference at the PKR headquarters in Petaling Jaya today.

He also urged his supporters to throw their support behind Lim.

Chua explained that his more than two weeks of silence was to reflect on the path that he should pursue next.

"I must disappoint some people today and some leaders outside by saying at no time did I ever consider resigning from PKR.

"I remained, during my leave and at this point of time, a PKR member and leader and I intend to remain so," the former MCA leader said.

'No seats left for me'

Chua also denied that he had been offered DAP's Segamat seat, adding that he would not be taking any parliamentary seat from his PKR peers.

"We had 12 parliamentary seats, we have 11 now (minus Gelang Patah). We have very good people who will be candidates and I am not in the business of usurping anybody's seat.

"I intend to see these people continue to stand and I will not ask anyone to step down for me," he said.

Chua (right) thanked his party members for attempting to find an alternative seat for him but said there was none for him as of now.

"I had a house called Gelang Patah, I was asked to work there and lead the charge for Johor

PKR, but I was told to leave the house.

"The party sought to look for other houses for me to get back our 12 seats quota, it was good of them to do so, but it does not matter to me. What is important is Pakatan wins big in Johor," he said.

Chua added that his advanced age also meant contesting in the general election was not the only priority.

"I have come to that stage in life where I have options - I win if I stand (in the general election) and I also win if I don't stand. It is an enviable position to be in."

Azmin: Negotiations in the works

Nevertheless, Chua said should he be offered a seat later on, he would give it serious consideration.

Meanwhile, the DAP's candidate for Segamat in 2008, Pang Hok Liong, is quoted by Sin Chew Daily today as saying he would contest as a third party should the Segamat seat be offered to Chua.

At a press conference later, PKR deputy president Azmin Ali said negotiations on the fate of Chua were ongoing.

"I will be meeting DAP later today and I am confident that this matter can be solved in a proper and orderly manner," Azmin said.

Earlier, when asked if he had buried the hatchet with Johor DAP chairperson Dr Boo Cheng Hau, Chua said there was no quarrel to begin with.

"I never sought to quarrel or start anything with Boo. I merely responded and I did with very little comment, other than to say the final decision will be left to the top leadership.

"He is a young DAP leader and I believe he has a great future ahead of him," he said.

Chua and Boo (left) had, over the last few months, crossed swords over seat negotiations in Johor, with Gelang Patah being among one of the contentious points.

Asked if there had been offers for him to leave PKR during his period of silence, Chua replied: "That is something very natural but my answer is absolutely no, no, no".

He added that some of his supporters were disappointed that he would not be defending his Gelang Patah seat but said the disappointment would not last.

Chua added that he has since returned to duty and thanked his lieutenants for leading the party in his absence.

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