

Goodbye Dr Lim, hello Dr Koh
Malaysiakini.com
April 7, 2007
Bede Hong

Political party Gerakan today bid farewell to Dr Lim Keng Yaik at an extraordinary national delegate's conference that saw party members giving their final salutations to the boisterous politician who led the party for 26 years.

Today's conference also served as a public transition of power as delegates unanimously passed a motion of support in favour of acting president Dr Koh Tsu Koon of the multiracial BN component party.

The conference, which saw 1,800 delegates present at the party headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, saw members going through the motions of thanking immediate past president Lim for his contributions.

At one point, tears streamed down Lim's face during a speech by a veteran Perak delegate, Gerakan Perak vice-chairperson Ong Kah Khoon, who spoke endearingly of Lim.

"In his political career, he has written a very glorious page for the party. History will regard him well," said Ong.

Earlier Lim's speech was occasionally punctuated with self-deprecating jokes, but took a serious note when it came to the party's struggles.

"As a good member of Gerakan, I assure you that I would not disappear... After so many years at the helm, it is time I passed on the baton to my fellow comrades, who I remind that the struggle of the party is far from over," he said.

"I will serve in other capacities when needed. However, it is time new leadership takes over," he added. He had helmed the party exactly 26 years and seven months.

Be committed and sincere

He called party members to support Koh as party members perfunctorily rose to clap. A total of 14 delegates spoke in support of Koh.

Apart from being the party's advisor, Lim is still the minister of energy, water and communications.

Lim started his political journey with Gerakan's rival - but a fellow member in the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition - MCA during his early forays. He was however sacked from MCA in 1973 for challenging party leadership.

He then joined Gerakan the same year and was made deputy president the following year.

In 1980, he took over the reigns of Gerakan after the retirement of the then president Dr Lim Chong Eu.

Koh in his speech, played down the succession and called for party members to continue the

party's thematic grassroots politics.

"There may be a shift of leadership, but it is like a relay. For me personally, I have never been a person who have fought or sought a party position," he added.

He also thanked Lim for his services to the party.

"The two words that he (Lim) has always reminded us of are to be committed and sincere. Lim has led by example, he should be remembered for his contributions... Thank you is not enough," he said.

'Don't ask my advice'

Later during a press conference, Lim said though he would no longer play an active role, he would continue to engage grassroots supporters.

"I would like to be able to train party members to be imbued with the struggle of Gerakan," said Lim, who wished to travel the country.

Lim said he would not be interfering with party politics: "My first advice [to Koh as advisor] is don't ask for my advice. Do what you feel is right."

Lim said, "I want to remind party member to never be complacent although we are part of a governing party, a component of the [ruling] BN.

Asked if he would spend more time with family after stepping down, Lim replied, "No. No time for them until after the general elections."

Asked why he cried earlier despite saying he would not in his speech, he replied to the laughter of reporters, "I didn't cry. I was just wiping my face... Actually when the [delegate] from Perak spoke of his 35 years with Gerakan, I recall the decades I have been with the party.

"Although I am strong, I'm human. A little tears [sic] came out... from nostalgia," he added.

Koh said Lim would continue to attend the central committee meetings: "It is a rather unique Gerakan arrangement [that a party advisor serves in the cabinet]."

Koh added he would not serve as acting president until 2010, as mistakenly mentioned by a speaker today. The Gerakan party election is expected to be held next year.

A close associate to Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Koh is on his fourth term as chief minister of Penang.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/65647>