

Gerakan down, but not out'
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Gerakan may be down, but it's not out of action or irrelevant, said party president Koh Tsu Koon.

gerakan congress 071110 koh tsu koonContrary to the claims of its detractors who have tried to portray Gerakan as being "useless" and "hopeless", Koh (left) said the party was as dynamic and attractive as ever, promising the entry of 20,000 new members into the party from all states.

Another 5,000 people will be joining Gerakan, Koh claimed further.

All this in addition to the entry into the party of an independent assemblyman in Pahang, two assemblypersons and their supporters in the Sandakan as well as the Kota Kinabalu area, said Koh, who noted that a prominent leader and his supporters in Tawau had joined earlier this year.

"We may be down, but definitely not out. Our detractors try to portray Gerakan as being 'useless' and 'hopeless.' If so, why have three independent elected representatives chosen to join us in the past one and a half years, instead of joining other bigger parties?

"If so, why have 20,000 new members joined us from all states, while another 5,000 are in the pipeline?

"If not because they appreciate our ideology and ideals, as well as our past track record and performance?

"If not because they see Gerakan leaders as relatively honourable, honest and humble, sincere and serious, clean and efficient, in our service for the people and contribution to nation building?" said Koh, who is Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

The party is said to be struggling to maintain relevance in the wake of its worst ever electoral defeat in the 2008 general elections.

It came away with only two parliament seats compared to the 10 seats it had before the election. As a result of the outcome, Gerakan also lost its only cabinet post as well as the government of Penang after governing it for 39 years.

Gerakan's appeal, said Koh, is the party's aim of achieving a truly united 1Malaysia.

"True to the spirit of Deepavali as the festival of lights over darkness, we in Gerakan are committed to promote the triumph of good over evil.

"This commitment very much reflects the wishes of the common people in Malaysia who want a good government free of corruption, a safe environment free of crimes and development-triggered 'natural' calamities and a harmonious society free of extremism and social ills.

"We want quality education for our younger generations to be enlightened and empowered by knowledge, skills and positive attitude. We also want inclusiveness, not exclusiveness,

harmony over animosity, integration over segregation or assimilation.”

National Movement of Moderates

The party stands for the 'middle path', said Koh, which serves as a lifeline during these times when country is plagued by divergent and extremist views, political uncertainty and emotional anxiety, and serious legacies of the past.

gerakan life member council congress 061110 koh tsu koonTo combat such negative developments, Koh said BN should launch a 1Malaysia National Movement of Moderates to mobilise and galvanise the pool of goodwill and good sense amongst the vast majority of Malaysians.

“The BN must lead in forging the politics of moderation, and in promoting the moderation of politics, in Malaysia. We should do so with a sense of urgency because, in recent months, the voices of extremism seem to be on the rise and threatening to take centre stage.

“These have triggered off adverse reactions, not only in the media and the internet, but also amongst the common people who feel a sense of anxiety and even anger.”

'Institutionalise 1Malaysia'

Koh also touched on the federal constitution, pointing out that Article 153 safeguards the special position of the Malays and natives of Sabah and Sarawak as well as the interests of the other communities.

“We must also refer to and recognise the fundamental liberties... regarding equality before the law; freedom of religion, speech and association; freedom from discrimination; right to property and education, as well... citizenship.

multiple religious religion icons 181207“Similarly, while Islam is the religion of the Federation, freedom of religious beliefs and practices are also clearly enshrined in Articles 3 and 11.”

He said channels and mechanisms must be provided for positive engagement and constructive dialogue to achieve better understanding and acceptance of, and respect for, these fundamental principles in the constitution, and that the love for the nation, the willingness to share, to give and take, will provide the genuine basis for harmony and unity.

“Hence, we should not only support the concept and spirit of 1Malaysia, but we must also further elaborate and institutionalise 1Malaysia as the basic foundation for the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes for the benefit of all Malaysians.”

In this context, said Koh, it is important for our children to learn about our nation's history to promote awareness and cultivate a sense of patriotism.

The teaching of history, however, should be 'comprehensive' and take into cognisance of world historical trends, 'inclusive' of the contributions and sacrifices of all communities, and objective in terms of analysis rather than the regurgitation of names, facts and figures.

Koh also suggested that there should be consistent introduction of English terminologies for science and mathematics at the lower secondary level.

Mathematics, science and technology subjects should be taught in the English language at the upper-secondary and tertiary levels to prepare the younger generations.

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