

Tsu Koon offers to quit as Gerakan chief
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Beh Lih Yi

Gerakan acting president Dr Koh Tsu Koon has offered to resign from the party post, saying that he has to take full responsibility for the party's dismal performance especially in Penang. MCPX

In the general elections yesterday, Gerakan was totally wiped out in the state by the DAP-led opposition, which won 29 out of 40 seats in the island state.

"As a captain of the team, I take full responsibility of what has happened," he announced the decision at a joint press conference with DAP's CM-designate Lim Guan Eng at the chief minister's office in Penang this afternoon.

koh tsu koon pc 060308 03Koh said he will convey his decision to party leaders but added that the final decision lies in the party as his resignation could pose a leadership transition problem in Gerakan.

"As I am holding the post of acting president, it will be quite awkward if I step aside. Who is going to be acting president? We have to hold the party election immediately then and that may pose quite a bit of problem.

"We will have to discuss to see how the party leaders feel, but my own preference is I have to take the full responsibility. I have to do what I believe is the honourable thing to do," the academician-turned-politician said.

He added that party leaders will meet soon for a post-mortem on Gerakan's performance.

Nevertheless, when asked, Koh said he will nevertheless consider a role in government and did not rule out the possibility of being appointed as a senator.

Meeting with Guan Eng

Koh assumed the party mantle from Dr Lim Keng Yaik who retired last April. He is leading the party in an acting capacity pending the party polls slated for next year.

Gerakan had held the state government since 1969 and yesterday's defeat was the party's worst ever electoral outing, where Koh himself was routed by DAP rookie Prof P Ramasamy in the Batu Kawan parliamentary constituency.

Koh, who had been at the helm of Penang for 18 years, had planned to move to the federal levels after the polls by contesting a parliament seat.

Nationally, Gerakan is now left with two parliamentary and three state seats, drastically down from the previous figure at 10 and 30 respectively in the 2004 general elections.

Asked whether he had underestimated the opposition in this polls, Koh said: "We probably didn't expect the swing to be so big - I don't know whether Guan Eng expected it to be so big - (but) I can say most of us are surprise."

He urged the Penangites to give the new government the opportunity to do its work and said he will serve his duty as a citizen of Penang by offering his advice should the new CM asks for it.

Leaders pose for photos

Earlier Koh met with Lim briefly, where the newly-elected leader informed the outgoing CM that he had called on the Penang governor at 2pm over the change of state government.

guan eng ceramah in canning ipoh 260208 pic 1The duo met journalists for a 20-minute press conference later. The atmosphere in the room was courteous with the two leaders posing for photographs and Koh cracking a few jokes at times.

Speaking at the press conference, the DAP leader thanked Koh for his assurance of a smooth transition of power.

"Hopefully you can show me around a bit," quipped Lim, referring to the chief minister's office.

The CM-designate has said earlier that he will be sworn in officially on Tuesday.

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