

Gerakan brings forward party polls
Malaysiakini.com
Apr 29, 2008
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The Gerakan party polls which was initially postponed until next year will be held this year, announced party secretary-general Chia Kwang Chye today.
MCPX

Notices would be sent out beginning today and branch level elections would have to be conducted by June 16, followed by the division (July 28) and state (Sept 19), he said.

gerakan party election pc 290408 chia kwang chye On Jan 12, the party's central working committee (CWC) postponed the elections from 2008 to 2009 to avoid a possible clash with the general election. The CWC reversed the decision on April 27.

"But because the election was held earlier than expected, we decided on April 27 to bring forward the election to this year (as previously scheduled)," said Chia during a press conference at the party headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.

The elections will involve 1,600 branches and 165 divisions.

Chia explained that the branch chairpersons are "powerful" in the party as they are automatically made delegates at the division, state and national levels.

"Our target is to have 30 percent of branch and division chairpersons changed. We want to encourage renewal and changes," he said.

Back to basics

To a question, Chia believed that there was no indication that there will be an "intense contest" in the upcoming polls.

"More importantly, we need to decide on the direction to move forward," he said, adding that the main target was to recapture Penang.

However, he refused to reveal his personal plans regarding the party polls, adding that his immediate priority was to secure his chairmanship of his branch.

In a related development, Chia revealed that the party aims to go "back to basics" to rebuild Gerakan following its poor showing in the general election.

To do so, the party will be organising training sessions for members to strengthen the party's ideological base and core values.

The party also aims to expand by absorbing younger members and re-establishing itself as a multi-ethnic party.

"There will be a special emphasis on recruiting non-Chinese Malaysians as party members," he added.

100-day honeymoon

Asked for more details on the matter, Chia conceded that the party "strayed away" from its original foundations.

"When the party was formed in 1968 and contested in 1969. It was a multi-ethnic party which fielded multi-ethnic candidates. We managed to capture the state of Penang.

"Subsequently, after Gerakan joined Barisan Nasional, we had less and less Malay members and more Chinese and Indian members," he explained.

On the party's long-term plans to recapture Penang, Chia revealed that a brain storming session will be held next month involving CWC members, party candidates during the general election, youth and women's wing representatives as well as selected young party members.

Chia said the party will also refrain from criticizing the present Penang government for the time being.

"People have voted them in and we respect their wishes. We'll let them have their honeymoon. No more than 100 days. They need to get their act together. We're waiting to see what they have done then," he said.

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