

Koh : we'll miss Toh but we'll survive
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Beh Lih Yi

Gerakan acting president Dr Koh Tsu Koon has been saddened by party stalwart Dr Toh Kin Woon's decision to MCPX quit the party and will try to persuade him to reconsider.

"I am sad and regret that he takes this decision although I understand his decision and stand," Koh told a press conference held in a hotel in Seberang Jaya this morning.

"To be active in a NGO does not necessary mean you have to quit the party, many leaders are also active in NGO (at the same time). We hope after this we will still be friends, I have known him for 26, 27 years through our struggles in Gerakan," he added.

Koh described Toh as a "very important leader" to the party.

The 64-year-old Toh, an academician-turned-politician and former Penang exco, quit the party yesterday to concentrate on NGO work - particularly in the field of Chinese education and with reform movement Aliran.

toh kin woon 101007 stressing pointHis decision came barely 24 hours after he visited the PKR election operation centre to show his open support for the opposition party's candidate Anwar Ibrahim.

Toh then reaffirmed his support for Anwar as he felt that the PKR leader's entry to Parliament will strengthen democracy and widen democratic space.

He denied he was under any pressure to quit Gerakan due to his open support for Anwar.

No more exits

Koh conceded to journalists that there will be some impact from Toh's departure on Gerakan-a BN multiracial component party which used to administer Penang.

"Party members may feel sad and confused, but whatever the impact is, we will handle it," said Koh, who also stressed that there was a lot of democratic space within Gerakan to express views.

Toh is the second senior Gerakan politician to quit the party after the general election in March.

Former Gerakan deputy secretary-general Lee Kah Choon resigned in April after accepting the chairperson position of InvestPenang from Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng.

Another Gerakan leader, Federal Territories chief Dr Tan Kee Kwong is in limbo after accepting a key position in the Pakatan Rakyat Selangor government.

koh tsu koon wawasan university 220906 ponderThe Gerakan acting president defiantly expressed that he was not expecting more exits.

"Except Lee whose departure came as a surprise, the other was not totally unexpected because they have been quite outspoken. I don't anticipate a bigger exodus but we do have to enhance our communication between the top leaders and the grassroots leaders," he said.

On Gerakan Perak's proposal to pullout from BN, Koh said that just represented some views within the grassroots and stressed that it was normal to have different views in a political party.

Koh said since the last general election, the BN supreme council - which comprises all party leaders- has met many times compared to before the general election.

"This shows the sincerity of our main leaders and how we can reach our consensus even though there are differences," he replied.

He reiterated that the issue of pulling out from BN does not arise now and vowed that Gerakan will speak up on issues.

"We will not be blinded by emotions in making decision, however at the same time, we won't be 'yes' man in BN. We will always express views within or outside (BN)," he said.

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