

Special meeting proposed to discuss Gerakan's status in BN
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Khoo Kay Peng

Outgoing Gerakan Youth chief Mah Siew Keong has urged the party leadership to hold a special meeting to discuss the party's future in Barisan Nasional.

"This suggestion (to pull out of Barisan Nasional) comes from a portion of the grassroots and as responsible leaders, we must face this sentiment," said Mah, in his opening address at the Gerakan national delegates conference today.

mah siew keongMah said a thorough discussion was necessary to avoid making emotional decisions that did not take into account the long term implications to the party.

Drawing upon history, Mah said in 1971, when Gerakan became a founding member of BN, many party leaders such as Syed Hussien Alatas, Dr Tan Chee Koon and V David disagreed with the move and left the party.

He cited the example of Sabah Progressive Party which saw several leaders leaving the party because they disagreed with the party pulling out of BN.

"We don't want a similar situation to happen and split our party," said Mah.

tan lian hoeGerakan Women's chief Tan Lian Hoe also broached the subject and suggested that the party only stay with BN should the coalition adopt a more multiracial approach.

"Are Barisan leaders, particularly from Umno, ready to change their struggle for a multiracial society (through) fairness, without any prejudice, extremism and communalism?" she asked.

"If Barisan components are ready to change, leaving aside their self interests and prioritising a multiracial struggle, Gerakan will be loyal and stay with BN."

ISA condemned

Meanwhile, both leaders also criticised the government for the recent use of the Internal Security Act (ISA).

Mah urged the government to amend the Act to limit its powers to detaining "subversive and terrorist elements".

He said an immediate measure the government could take to show it was sincere in reforming was to release ISA detainees who have been in detention for a long time and those with health problems.

isa 3 teresa raja petra tan hoon chengHe said the recent arrests of DAP politician Teresa Kok, blogger Raja Petra Kamarudin and journalist Tan Hoon Cheng was unnecessary and had tarnished the image of the government.

Tan said the party's women's wing is strongly against the use of ISA and wants the

immediate release of all ISA detainees.

"The ISA has been abused to silence the voices of the people for the political interest of a handful of (political) leaders," she said.

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