

**Last rites begin for Gerakan <http://www.google.com/buzz/post>
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The last rites for Gerakan have started to be performed by no lesser person than its former president Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik, who has announced that he is quitting as the party advisor due to the lack of confidence in current party chief Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon.

The outspoken maverick KengYaik said on Monday 4 October 2010 that he would be resigning as the party advisor because of disappointment over the politically infirm Tsu Koon's tendency to "bury his head in the sand."

Formed on 24 March 1968, the party descended to its worst electoral performance during the March 2008 general election, losing control of the Penang state government which it held for nearly 40 years, and winning only two parliamentary seats compared to 10 previously. Tsu Koon was among those kicked out by the Penangites.

The party was founded on 24 March 1968 by internationally renowned sociologist Prof Syed Hussein Alatas, Methodist lay leader Tan Sri Dr David Tan Chee Khoo, popular trade unionist V. David, MCA's second president Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu, and many idealistic young academics and professionals.

At its formation, Gerakan was a popular opposition party, not affiliated with the federal ruling Alliance coalition, the predecessor of the Barisan Nasional. During the 10 May 1969 general election, Gerakan won most of the seats in the state legislature of Penang, and Chong Eu was installed as the chief minister, and served for a record 21 years, until 1990, when he stepped down in favour of Tsu Koon.

Following the tragic May 13 racial riots soon after the 1969 general election, Gerakan agreed to join an expanded Alliance coalition under a new name Barisan Nasional, created and headed by Tun Abdul Razak in 1973 as a means to reduce politicking and to promote racial harmony and peaceful co-existence among the various races. Gerakan has remained a Barisan Nasional component party until now.

The Gerakan membership, since its founding, comprises about 80% Chinese, 15% Indian, and 5% Malays and other races. Its leadership is predominantly Chinese, although it claims to be a multi-ethnic party.

The party started its decline following the stepping down of Keng Yaik as president on 8 April 2007 to pave the way for Tsu Koon to take over the reins as party chief.

Contrary to the expectations of party members and many outside the party, Tsu Koon proved to be a weak leader, being seen as a mere office-boy of his Umno bosses, even in his role as the chief minister of Penang. The end-result is the almost elimination of Gerakan during the political tsunami of 2008, with the party being wiped out in Penang, with Tsu Koon and the top party leaders among the casualties.

The most shameful event in the party's history is the dishonourable renegade of the election pledge by Tsu Koon during the campaigning of the 2008 general election that he would not join the cabinet via the backdoor with a senatorship if he were to lose in the polls. His acceptance of a minister's post via an appointment as a senator soon after the election caused the loss of respect for him and Gerakan among the people, including party members.

By accepting the minister post via a senatorship, Tsu Koon has discredited himself, and brought shame to his party. At least MIC president S. Samy Vellu and MCA president Chua Soi Lek show more credibility than the Gerakan president and could walk with their heads high by not grabbing ministerial appointments for themselves via the backdoor.

Being given a ministerial post as a compensation for loss in an election will render one to being tied to political patronage, and becoming politically impotent and at the beck and call of the political patron.

Hence, it is not surprising that a recent Merdeka Center survey shows that only 1% of Chinese voters have any respect for Tsu Koon, meaning quite obviously that there are Gerakan members among the 99% who do not have confidence in him. Keng Yaik is definitely one of them!

Several weeks ago, Tsu Koon had boasted in Kuala Terengganu that Gerakan still has the support of the people because it has set up 170 new branches nationwide since the March 2008 general election. But he did not mention that Gerakan was almost totally wiped out, particularly in Penang, and he himself was kicked out by the people during the 2008 general election.

The Merdeka Center survey shows that Tsu Koon is deluding himself that he and Gerakan still have the support of the people. With a 1% support of the community, what relevance do Tsu Koon and Gerakan have?

The people have no confidence in Gerakan and reject the party because its leader is seen as a person with no principle and no integrity.

Take, for example, the 2009 Kampung Buah Pala issue in Penang. Tsu Koon had then attacked the DAP-controlled Penang state government and blamed Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng for the problems faced by the residents in the area, whose houses were ordered to be demolished.

The irresponsible comment by Tsu Koon exposes the type of person he is -- a coward to the core who does not admit and accept responsibility for his own mistake.

The whole Kampung Buah Pala nonsense was created by his administration, with the scandalous deal negotiated, concluded and sealed by him when he was the chief minister.

About the only thing the Guan Eng administration did was being forced to honour the Tsu Koon scandalous deal by allowing the legitimate payment approved earlier by Tsu Koon when he was the chief minister.

In fact, it was just procedural that the state agency responsible paid out the money as it had been approved by Tsu Koon when he was in power, and I doubt Guan Eng actually knew about the payment until the scandal exploded.

Tsu Koon not only failed to admit that it was him who created the problems, but dumped the whole load of rubbish for Guan Eng to clean up. No person, especially Penangites, worth his or her salt will give Tsu Koon any respect for refusing to admit and accept responsibility for the Kampung Buah Pala fiasco.

Tsu Koon is obviously a liability to the 250,000-strong Gerakan as whatever little respect the people, especially Penangites, have for him has been buried with his unprincipled action over the Kampung Buah Pala fiasco, and his backdoor elevation to the cabinet.

As a minister, Tsu Koon has not done anything positive, concrete or commendable so far. His handling of the inter-faith panel initiated by the Najib administration, for example, is a big joke, to say the least.

The Cabinet Special Committee to Promote Inter-Religious Harmony and Understanding (SCPIRHU) has remained silent soon after its inaugural meeting on 6 April this year, after several Muslim groups and muftis balked at the inclusion of the term "inter-religious" in the name of the panel. The Muslim groups also want Tsu Koon removed as minister-in-charge of the panel, and proposed that he be replaced by Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom, the minister in charge of Islamic religious affairs. See how much respect Tsu Koon has among the Barisan Nasional people.

Tsu Koon has not been able to make any headway to get the panel (SCPIRHU), which has since been renamed the Committee to Promote Religious Understanding and Harmony, going even months after its set-up, which shows how ineffective he is as a minister.

Also, when Umno secretary-general Tengku Adnan publicly distanced his party from the Malay rights group Perkasa last month, Tsu Koon was among the first to rush to support him. Yet a week later when Prime Minister Najib Razak made a turnaround on the attempt to reject Perkasa and push through his multi-racial 1Malaysia plan, Tsu Koon did not question Najib or Adnan. Instead he tried to divert the public attention with an assault on the secular DAP and the Islamist PAS. Obviously, he is as flexible as the bamboo tree, bending according to the direction the wind is blowing.

Several former Gerakan leaders have also questioned the relevance of the party.

Its former Nibong Tebal MP Datuk Dominic J. Puthuchery, for example, has been reported as saying that the party has no power and influence at all, and that it is pertinent simply because of its link with the Barisan Nasional.

Former Gerakan Wanita chief Datuk Rhina Bhar, ex-Gerakan Penang state executive councillor Datuk Dr Toh Kin Woon, former Gerakan deputy minister Datuk Dr Tan Kee Kwon, among many others, may not be vocal in complaining against the party they had served for many years, but their unfavourable views on the party leadership is well-known publicly.

The impending demise of Gerakan is certain, and it is time perhaps for those sincere and honest members of the party who have the love and interest of the nation at heart to move out to channel their time, effort and resources to a more useful and beneficial political alternative party to serve the nation.

Edward Gibbon, the author of the definitive *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* has attributed the fall of the Roman Empire to the loss of civic virtue and decline in morality among the Roman citizens. The gradual disintegration of the Roman economy and the barbarian invasions were the final nails in the Empire's coffin.

The lesson of Rome has been an archetype for every perceived decline and fall of a nation or an organization, and, hence, should also serve as a symbol for our own fears.

The Gerakan members should pay close attention to Gibbon's contention and conclusion that moral decay was the fundamental reason for the decline and fall of Rome. It started with the moral decay of an emperor with no principle, no integrity, and no shame.

Keng Yaik is absolutely right that a leader who doesn't bother about a very crucial and critical EGM in his own party, but is prepared to go for socializing in another Barisan Nasional component partner's function is not fit to continue leading the party.

"Tsu Koon is someone who hates getting involved in solving conflicts for fear of offending people," Keng Yaik was quoted as telling reporters at a press conference.

Keng Yaik said Tsu Koon's attitude of speaking no evil and burying his head in the sand had brought about many problems in the party.

Obviously, the days of Gerakan are number, given the type of leadership it has. Truly, the party has become more and more irrelevant by the day.

The no-confidence vote against Teng Hock Nan during the Penang Gerakan EGM on Sunday 10 October 2010 should extend to include such a vote on Tsu Koon.

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