

Keng Yaik to pass the baton to Koh on April 8

KUALA LUMPUR: Gerakan President Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said last night he will hand over the party leadership to Deputy President Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon on April 8 next year during a special conference of the party.

"I will hand over on April 8, 2007. I chose this date because it is my birthday," he said in a brief announcement to Gerakan members at a dinner for general assembly delegates, here.

Dr Lim's announcement ends speculation that he would hand over the party leadership to Dr Koh sometime between April and August.

After 26 years as Gerakan president, Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik has the experience to talk about leadership — which he did with his trademark frankness yesterday.

He said it took a good leader to identify opportunists in the membership "and boot them out".

Describing such opportunists as "snakes who must be taken out to the sea and drowned", he said opportunism was part of the political malaise in the party.

"There are members waiting for self-interest to be served instead of serving the interests of society," he said at the opening of the 2006 National Delegates' Conference.

Dr Lim, the Energy, Water and Communications minister, said good leadership was responsible for the welfare of the group and not certain individuals only.

"As a result, some people will get angry at your actions and decisions. A good leader is not a crowd pleaser or a populist."

Borrowing the words of a "prominent leader" whom he declined to identify, he said a leader who tried to get everyone to like him or her was exhibiting

signs of mediocrity.

"A good leader should not avoid making tough decisions, not be afraid of confronting the people who need to be confronted and not be afraid of offering rewards based on merit although people might get upset."

Dr Lim said Gerakan wanted leaders who had a "heart, brain and head" for the party, and not for opportunities for themselves.

Later, at a Press conference, Dr Lim said he wanted to draw attention to the presence of opportunists in the party who were merely in the party to seek positions and to "enrich themselves".

He said the days of "slogan shouting" leaders were over, and party members as well as all young leaders in the country had to strive for the welfare of their party and country.

On the BN, he said component

parties could not afford to get complacent.

"We see parties like the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan or the Kuomintang in Taiwan ruled for 50 years but were toppled because of complacency and leaders who got involved in all sorts of funny things."

Dr Lim started off his address with how he wanted to reflect on the present state of the party and provide some feedback on how it should navigate the future.

He said Gerakan had benefited immensely from the synergy created by the Barisan Nasional partnership, its success based on the spirit of co-operation between different ethnic groups.

The party, he said, had to be proactive in seeking out people who were passionate about national issues and wanted to contribute their knowledge, ideas



My job is finished, and I have done all I can to guide the party. The party is financially strong and is in good stead. Time to go means time to go, and I am looking forward to it.

and enthusiasm.

He also spoke on the Ninth Malaysia Plan, the National Integrity Plan and the importance of enhancing human capital in ensuring national growth.

Malaysians should also not take their good fortune for granted, Dr Lim said, with signs of national polarisation checked quickly to "ensure 49 years of good efforts invested in nation building do not go to waste".

On his successor Dr Koh, Dr Lim said he had the "greatest confidence that the party was in safe hands".

"Things are going on smoothly."

Dr Lim said amendments were being made to the party constitution to allow Koh to take over without problems. This would have to be accepted by the Registrar of Societies before Dr Lim steps down in April.