

Najib wants Koh to prove he is CM for all races

GEORGETOWN: Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak wants Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon to be steadfast in the true sense of being a chief minister for all.

He reiterated that the government was against the rotation of the chief ministership in the state, but stressed that Koh should represent all, including the Malays.

He said this when opening the Tanjung Umno delegates conference here yesterday.

Present were Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Seri Abdul Rashid Abdullah and the division's chief, Datuk Ahmad Ibnihajar.

"What is important is the fact that the Barisan Nasional-led Government is against the rotation of the chief minister's post," Najib said.

"However, this does not mean that we are not serious in addressing the Malay issues in Penang. We are doing all this based on the Barisan Nasional spirit.

"In fact, Koh himself had promised me that he would be a chief minister for all races."

Najib added that he had spoken to Koh on Friday, asking him to have an open discussion with the state Umno.

Last month, at the launching of a publicity campaign for the Penang Structure plan at the Penang Island Municipal Council building, Koh, who was criticised by local Umno leaders for allegedly not doing enough for the Malays, had defended his leadership and emphasised that he was a chief minister for all races.

Koh also told his detractors not to play the race card.

They had, among other things, accused the state administration of neglecting certain Malay-majority areas and the economic situation of the Malays on the island.

There have also been calls for the chief minister's post to be rotated among BN component parties but the idea was shot down by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Earlier in his speech, Najib said Penang Umno had an important role to play in its struggle to ensure the Malays in the State were not marginalised.

He said the party should also set a benchmark and come out with approaches and formulas to address the issue at hand.

Najib also touched on the need for a leader who is able to bring about transformation and positive changes.

Meanwhile, Koh said an informal meeting between the state Gerakan and Umno Youth was held recently to sort out allegations of Malays being marginalised in Penang.

The meeting between state Gerakan Youth chief Huan Cheng Guan and his Umno counterpart Salim Bari took place on Wednesday.

Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein had asked Koh to meet state Umno leaders to iron out issues pertaining to the Malay development in the state.

"Had there been no demonstration from members of the Balik Pulau Umno division against me on Tuesday. I would have met the Umno leaders already," said Koh.

On Tuesday, Balik Pulau Umno Youth members had staged a protest against Koh during the opening of the Tanjung Umno division's new office by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Koh said it was crucial that the informal meeting between Gerakan and Umno at the Youth level was held to avoid any further misunderstanding.