

Koh should not be blamed, says Keng Yaik

PUTRAJAYA: Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said yesterday Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, who is his party deputy, should not be blamed if groups of backward Malays existed in the state.

He said this was because some Malays residing in Penang chose not to accept modernisation and progress despite fair development undertaken by the existing administration.

"I can say that Malays in Penang have better living standards compared with those residing in other states," he said.

Based on his observations since being at the helm of the party for 26 years, Lim said, there were Malays who chose to maintain their traditional rural lifestyle.

"So do not blame Tsu Koon if there are Malays in Penang who are backward," he told a special press conference called to announce details of Gerakan's general assembly on Saturday.

Lim said this when asked to comment on claims by some Umno division leaders in Penang that the Malays there were marginalised and sidelined by the state's administration.

On Sunday, Bukit Mertajam Umno division chief Datuk Musa Sheikh Fadzir had even demanded that Koh relinquish his position as the chairman of the Penang Water Supply Corporation. He alleged that there was favouritism in the management of the corporation.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had on Sunday requested that development projects in Penang be well distributed and not overly emphasised on the island alone.

He had said that areas where the majority of its residents were Malays, like Balik Pulau, remained underdeveloped compared with George Town and the northern parts of the island.

On the Gerakan assembly, Lim said he did not want the remarks made by Umno Youth vice-chief Khairy Jamaluddin and the proposal calling for the rotation of the chief minister's post to be made discussion topics.

"I feel there is no need to make it an issue. It is a non-issue for Gerakan," he said. **Bernama**