

Gerakan will stay strong

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Sec-gen: Transition won't weaken party

KUALA LUMPUR: Gerakan will not be a weaker party when Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon takes over as acting party president from Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik.

Secretary-general Datuk Seri Chia Kwang Chye said Dr Koh had many internal strengths including intellectual strength.

"When he makes up his mind, it's not easy to debate with him because he is a very knowledgeable person and very well read.

"He is intellectually very sound and that is a strength," he said at a press conference yesterday to announce details on the coming Gerakan extraordinary National Delegates Conference (eNDC).

The eNDC will be held on April 8 to ensure the smooth transition of power from party president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik to his deputy Dr Koh.

Dr Lim announced at the National Delegates Conference last September that he was stepping down as party president and wanted his deputy to take over.

Chia denied that Gerakan would become a more subdued party without the colourful personality of Dr Lim at the helm.

"No two persons are the same in style and thinking. Gerakan has been very stable for so many years due to the maturity and understanding of members and leaders in being a purposeful party and leaders who know which

direction we are heading," he said.

He pointed out that Gerakan had already paved the way to reinvent itself to be relevant in modern times, and had set up its Wawasan open university, and institutionalised its membership processing to meet ISO 9000 standards and show transparency.

He said there were also plans for a dialogue centre under University Wawasan for open and frank discussions within closed doors on issues of concern, including on religion and politics.

To a question, he said that there was no need for Dr Koh, who is the Penang Chief Minister, to move to Kuala Lumpur in order to lead Gerakan.

He noted that when Tun Lim Chong Eu was Gerakan president back in 1972, he operated from Penang.

On the eNDC on April 8, Chia said he did not foresee any problems with delegates agreeing to let Dr Lim let go of the party's top post.

"We certainly value the leadership. However reluctant we feel, we also must respect the wishes of Dr Lim who feels that he has been leading the party for more than 26 years and wants to allow a younger person to lead," he said.

The eNDC has two resolutions: the first, to debate the resignation of Dr Lim, and the second, to support Dr Koh as the acting president.