

Keng Yaik says he won't interfere

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HE WILL ADVISE ONLY WHEN ADVICE IS SOUGHT

by **Giam Say Khoo**
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

KUALA LUMPUR: "No need to seek advice." That is the first advice given by newly-appointed Gerakan adviser Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, who retired as the party president yesterday, to acting president Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon.

This does not mean that Lim, who has helped the party for 26 years and seven months, was shirking his new responsibility.

It is meant to indicate that he will not interfere with the running of the party and knows when to "shut up".

Conveying this at a press conference after the Gerakan extraordinary national delegates conference at party headquarters, Lim said he would advise whenever advice was sought, and shut up when no one asked for his views.

"Asked whether he would be involved in the party's decision-making process and become another Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (who is now a strong critic of Umno and the government), he said he would only advise when the party asked for it.

"Who am I to dictate the party? Yes, I would speak up in the central committee if I find that things are not right," he said.

At the one-day conference, the 1,800 delegates passed the resolutions to accept Lim's retirement and to appoint him as the party's adviser yesterday, which was also his 68th birthday.

They also endorsed Koh, the party deputy president and Penang chief minister, as the acting president until the next party election.

In his 30-minute speech, Lim cited Greek philosopher Aristotle, who said "one should keep the torch burning brightly before passing it on to the next person".

"I hope I have accomplished this feat. The party is bigger than any individual. I believe I am leaving you with the party at its best position possible," he said, urging the members to give their full support to Koh.

Lim will be handing over all party matters to Koh today, including letters to the president. He will continue to serve as the energy, water and communications minister until the next general election.

He is also expected to play a more

active role in the National Dialogue Centre (Nadi), set up under the Gerakan-backed Wawasan Open University in Penang. He now heads the university council. Nadi will be operational by the end of the year.

At the press conference, Lim said he expected Koh to arrange for him to go around the country and talk to the grassroots on the party's struggles and ideology, particularly its non-racial approach.

"If not, the party will become complacent that it is a part of the ruling Barisan Nasional. This is the part that I can contribute, not to criticise the party but to train the members to be imbued with the party's cause," he said.

Asked why the delegates held a closed-door meeting before the conference, Lim said he had nothing

to hide but it was a request by Koh that he gave a frank talk to the delegates.

Despite promising in recent interviews that he would not get emotional at the conference, which marked the handover to Koh, Lim did shed some tears.

When reporters asked him about this, Tapah-born Lim said he was touched when one of his comrades, Perak Gerakan vice-chairman Ong Kah Khoo, delivered his speech at the conference.

"Ong has been my comrade for 35 years. Of course, he reminded me of the past when we got together in the party and that (was touching)," he said.

"Although I'm a strong person, I'm a human being, too. Human beings must have feelings and emotions. I only cried a little bit and that's it."

Koh, who was present at the press conference, said Lim

had been asked to attend all the party's central committee meetings.

"After getting his advice, we will assess the situation and make the decision," he said.

Koh stressed that although there was a transition of power in the party, the same team of leaders and ideology remained. Although the leadership style will be different, he will carry on the work Lim passed on to him.

During the conference, speaker Datuk Dr Chin Fook Weng said Koh may be the acting president until 2010 if the party decided to postpone its party election in 2008.

Koh, however, told reporters later it was not for him to say whether he should continue to be the president without being elected.

Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik

- » Born on April 8, 1939
- » Had early education at St Michael's Institution, Ipoh. Received medical degree from Queen's University, Northern Ireland in 1964.
- » Married to Datuk Seri Wong Yoon Chuan and have three children.
- » Joined MCA in 1968.
- » Part of what was known as Reform Movement in MCA in early 1970s.
- » Appointed senator and minister with special functions in 1972.
- » Sacked from MCA after Reform Movement encountered stiff opposition from within party in 1973.
- » Joined Gerakan in 1973 and was elected Perak liaison committee chairman.
- » Elected Gerakan deputy president in 1974.
- » Became president when Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu retired in August 1980.
- » Became Beruas MP in 1986 (and has remained since).
- » Was primary industries minister from 1986 to 2004.
- » Became energy, water and communications minister after 2004 general election.
- » Retired as Gerakan president and appointed adviser on April 9, 2007.