

**"I urged Dr M to remove Koh as CM", says Tan  
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GEORGE TOWN ( Aug 13, 2011): Penang Chinese Chamber of Commerce president Tan Sri Tan Kok Ping said today his perception of Gerakan president Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon was already at a low ebb when the latter become Chief Minister of Penang in 1990.

That perception worsened to the point that Tan, a former Gerakan vice-president who began openly criticising Koh from 1993, went on, in 1999, to urge then Prime Minister Datuk Seri (now Tun) Dr Mahathir Mohammad to replace Koh with someone of better calibre after the elections.

Speaking at a press conference this afternoon to respond to Koh who yesterday denied allegations that he is incapable of leading the party and the Barisan Nasional coalition in Penang, Tan said: "I joined Gerakan in 1982 because of Tun Lim Chong Eu (Koh's mentor and predecessor as CM) but resigned in 1999 because of Koh.

"Developments in Penang like the Mengkuang Dam and the Jelutong Expressway (now known as the Tun Lim Chong Eu Expressway) was due to Lim ... Koh did not even finish 10% of what Dr Lim planned," said Tan, elaborating on his criticism that done little during his leadership of the state for 19 years from 1990 to 2008.

"If Penang had prospered under Koh's stewardship for 18 years as Koh claims, the current Pakatan Rakyat (DAP-PKR-PAS coalition) administration would not have come into power," said Tan, lamenting that the Penang had lost its position as the leading state in terms of development within three years of Koh becoming CM.

He added that the Gerakan's abyssal showing in the 2008 elections, not only affected the party but other Barisan Nasional component parties as well, including the MCA.

Koh who is now Minister in the Prime Minister Department yesterday claimed that as CM for 18 years, he had brought Penang rapid development and progress in economic, investment and infrastructure, and the state saw rapid progress with investments in manufacturing increasing to RM40bil for 2000-2008 compared to RM20bil for 1990-1999.

He had at a press conference commented on statements by Tan, former Gerakan vice-president Huan Cheng Guan, former Gerakan Youth vice-chairman Tan Tee Beng and Bayan Baru Member of Parliament Datuk Seri Zahrain Mohd Hashim, who had all voiced doubt as to his ability to lead the party.

Besides Tan's allegation that Koh "did not do anything in the last 18 years", Tee Beng and Zahrain had said Gerakan should change the leadership and introduce new faces if it is serious in recapturing Penang from the opposition.

"These are disgruntled people with baseless and nonsensical allegations," Koh had said in response, calling Zahrain, Tee Beng and Huan "political frogs" who have been discredited, and Tan "blind and senile" for not recognising that Penang had developed tremendously during the 18 years he (Koh) was CM.

Responding to Koh's claim that he was "blind and senile", Tan, 64 said: "Koh must have no mirrors at home. He should see for himself why he lost by over 10,000 votes in the last general elections which is sign by the people. And it is not that I am blind, but I 'mou ngan

tai' (Cantonese expression: just don't want to see or know)."

Tan also explained that the current round of verbal exchange with Koh arose because he had been asked to compare the performance of the three chief ministers (Dr Lim, Koh and current CM Lim Guan Eng) but only his criticisms against Koh had seen print in an article published last Sunday.

"The whole interview should have come out ... next time if (the media) ask me about politics, (I will say) no; but if (they) want to ask me about business, okay," he said, adding that he had no hidden agenda and was just speaking his mind.

In any case, Tan said he intended this press conference to be his last response to Koh as he does not want to "waste saliva" (talking about Koh).

However, he left the door open for future exchanges, saying he would take on Koh in an open debate if the latter persists in continuing the verbal exchange.

"If he stills want to respond, I will challenge him to an open debate," Tan added.

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