

Delegates Seek Answers With Approach Of Gerakan Conference On Sunday
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 12 (Bernama) -- With Sunday's Gerakan national delegates conference just three days away, many delegates and political observers cannot help but ponder on at least five pertinent questions, answers for which must be made crystal clear for the party to steer its future.

First and foremost, of course, is the question of whether first-term elected president Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon wants to go for a second term at the party elections next year.

Dr Koh has stated his intention to lead the party for at least two terms but until now, after he was verbally attacked for not coming out strongly in defending himself and Gerakan, party members claim they are unsure of that as there have been no signals to that effect as yet.

Secondly, many wonder if Dr Koh will contest in the next general election, the 13th, or choose to lead and strengthen the party's position in the Barisan Nasional (BN) without any other post for himself that could affect his solid focus on the party.

"It depends whether he wants to continue to lead the party for a second term. If he wants to lead the party, then he has to contest," said political analyst Datuk Cheah See Kian in an interview with Bernama.

He believes that should Dr Koh decide to lead the party for a second term, he would likely stand as a candidate in a parliamentary seat -- either Batu in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur or Batu Kawan in Penang.

"But I don't think he would want to go back to Tanjong (Penang). It very much depends on whether he wants to be in Kuala Lumpur or Penang. Even if he decides to lead Penang, I still believe Batu Kawan is still the better bet for him," he added.

Dr Koh stood in Batu Kawan in the last general election, in 2008, and lost to Prof P. Ramasamy, the current deputy chief minister of Penang.

Internally, some party members and leaders are already getting restless with Dr Koh who has so far kept the answer only to himself despite his earlier stand that he will lead the party in the next general election. He may already have the answer but is still keeping it very much to himself, being the careful leader that he is.

There is talk that he may even decide to contest in Simpang Renggam (Johor), a seat considered safe for him.

"However, many leaders and party members are against him standing in Simpang Renggam, including those from Johor. They feel it is inappropriate for him to do that," said a party insider.

Many would love to see Dr Koh as a gallant party president contesting in a tough seat and being an undisputed winner, which would automatically earn him more respect from party members and even from BN leaders.

Gerakan Youth chief Lim Si Pin announced two months ago that he would not defend his youth chief post and would not want to be a candidate again in the next general election.

In the 2008 general election, Lim, who is the only son of former Gerakan president Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik, was fielded to contest the Batu parliamentary seat but was defeated by PKR vice-president Tian Chua.

Apart from that, chances of Gerakan retaining two parliamentary seats - Simpang Renggam (Johor) and Gerik (Perak), that the party won in the 2008 general election -- also seem to be getting tougher because Gerik was on loan and is speculated to be returned to Umno as Gerakan will get back its Taiping seat from the People's Progressive Party (PPP).

Thus, another question arises and has put Gerakan Wanita chief Datuk Tan Lian Hoe (who represents Gerik) in limbo as to where she would be contesting in the next general election should the party decide to retain her in its line-up.

Gerakan secretary-general Teng Chang Yeow did not rule out the fact that some delegates may raise this issue and seek clarification from Dr Koh during the delegates conference.

"We can't stop delegates from asking that. It's the delegates' right and they can raise any issue they want at the conference," he said.

However, party vice-president Datuk Mah Siew Keong believes that Dr Koh will do what he thinks is best for the party as the situation is quite fluid at the moment.

"In not announcing ahead, Dr Koh has made the correct move. Why disclose everything before the time is ripe. I'm sure he has the party interest at heart and will make the best decision," he said.

Apart from that, another question is whether Gerakan will take a similar stand as the MCA -- not to accept any Cabinet post if it fails to perform in the next general election.

Dr Koh has said that the party has yet to decide whether or not to accept any Cabinet post if it fails to perform in the next general election.

However, many political observers would like to hear what the party veterans, through the party's Life Members Council, have got to say about the current party affairs when they meet on Oct 15. Keng Yaik is the chairman of the Gerakan Life Members Council.

Many party members believe it will only be fair to them to have Dr Koh give them crystal-clear answers to all the questions.

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