

## **Gerakan-Tsu Koon Dilemma Continues**

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**By Alan Ting**

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 9 (Bernama) -- Three days after the General Election on March 8, 2008, the then-acting Gerakan president Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon tendered his resignation letter as he took responsibility for the party's dismal performance in the election.

However, the Central Committee (CC) unanimously rejected his offer to resign during a meeting at the party's headquarters here. Even then-Gerakan advisor Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik said the party still needed Dr Koh to lead, more so after losing Penang.

In that election, Gerakan had won only two parliamentary and four state seats.

Matters took a turn for the worse in October last year. Dr Lim resigned as party advisor, and lambasted Dr Koh's attitude of 'speaking no evil and burying his head in the sand' as saddling Gerakan with many problems.

Recently, Dr Koh faced a barrage of attacks and criticisms -- from within and outside the party.

Some party leaders said the attack was understandable as they did not know the goings-on in the party as there was insufficient communication from the top leadership. Moreover, they said, they had not seen any plan by the leadership to revive the party.

"A lot of us do not know what is going on. Maybe, the president knows better," said a party grassroots leader who declined identification.

However, for Gerakan Youth chief Lim Si Pin, whatever said and done, he was more concerned about the party's preparation to face the coming general election (GE).

"I just hope the party can get itself ready and complete with strategies for the next general election. (The) Last strategy in 2008 didn't work. We need to completely overhaul this," he said.

As the party is holding its National Delegates Conference from Oct 14-16, there is no doubt, general election preparations will be the focus of the conference. However, to some political analysts, they are not convinced Gerakan is on track to face the election.

Universiti Sains Malaysia political analyst Dr Sivamurugan Pandian said Gerakan needed to put on 'a sense of leadership' as the next GE would be a do-or-die battle for the party.

"Dr Koh has talked about attack, defend and advocate. Why has not the party utilised that? You got to mobilise the grassroots support, that's how Keng Yaik survived so long in the party," he told Bernama.

However, secretary-general Teng Chang Yeow countered, arguing that the party had been preparing for the GE, since September last year. He said the party had carried out at least two rounds of interviews to prepare its list of candidates.

"The list is now with the president. He has not indicated when he would discuss with the

CWC (central working committee) or CC (central committee)," he said.

However, some party insiders pointed out that Dr Koh was also an 'issue' that the party had to face in the coming GE.

Dr Koh has said he would continue to helm Gerakan into the next GE and even expressed confidence the party was determined more than ever, to perform better after being humbled in the last election.

Deputy president Datuk Chang Ko Youn said initially, there were talks that some delegates wanted to move a motion to remove Dr Koh as party president but under the party constitution, such an effort needed the support from at least a two-thirds majority of the delegates.

"Some delegates felt it would put the party in more difficult position if such a motion was put forward," he told Bernama, adding that explained why some party members were against such a move although they were not really happy with Dr Koh's leadership.

Chang said the party leaders were aware of the problem and had been working behind the scenes, including asking Dr Koh not to contest in the next general election.

"One of the considerations is for him not to contest in the next general election or should he want to contest again, he should go to a tough seat," he said.

Along the line, at one of the sessions with the party leaders, some leaders had jokingly told Dr Koh to go back and contest the Tanjong parliamentary seat in Penang, where he was first elected as the people's representative after joining the party. Dr Koh won that seat in the 1982 general election.

"We are prepared. That's why, we postponed the party election (to next year) to create a better environment for the general election," party veteran Tan Sri Chin Fook Win told Bernama.

But, he cautioned that even if the party was well prepared, there was no guarantee that it could perform better.

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