

**Shun extremism, return to centre, Koh tells political parties**  
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**By Yow Hong Chieh**

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 16 — Barisan Nasional (BN) and the Opposition must compete to stake out the middle ground rather than give in to extremism, Gerakan president Tan Sri Koh Tsu Koon said today.

“In the context of our multi-racial and multi-religious reality, the two fronts ... must compete to be moderate, to move towards the middle, rather than towards the extremes.

“Politics in Malaysia should become more issue-based rather than race-based or religion-based,” he told the Gerakan National Delegates Assembly at Menara PGRM here today.

Koh said BN should lead by example in promoting the politics of moderation by taking “harsh action” against component party leaders at any level who make racist statements.

“In line with the prime minister’s clarion call for a global movement of moderates, BN should continue to fight against the irresponsible voices of extremism that threaten to take centre stage,” he said.

He said BN component parties should work more closely together to bolster the practice of multi-racialism in order to transform the ruling coalition into a truly 1 Malaysia party.

Koh added that BN must not shy away from competing in a two-party system as practised in mature democracies as that would attract even greater attention and support in Malaysia.

“Indeed, we should welcome, support and promote it. In fact, BN has learned a hard lesson from [the 12th general election] in 2008 that the people are like water, the government is like a ship,” he said.

“The water can raise the ship but it can also sink a ship, as the Chinese proverb goes.”

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