

Keng Yaik: I will step down early next year

LUMUT: After almost 26 years as the longest-serving president of Gerakan, Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik announced he is stepping down early next year.

The 67-year-old said yesterday he will step down from the post to pave the way for his deputy, Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, to succeed him.

He said the change of guard will take place at the party's extraordinary general meeting in the first quarter of next year, expected to be held after the Chinese New Year.

To empower the party to appoint his successor, the

party constitution will be amended at the annual general assembly on Sept 2, he told reporters after opening the delegates meeting and election of the Bruas division at Ayer Tawar near here.

Lim, who is energy, water and communications minister, has long been known to favour Koh, the 57-year-old Penang chief minister, to succeed him as party president.

The way was opened after Koh won the deputy presidency unopposed at the Gerakan elections last August, taking over from Datuk Seri Kerk Choo Ting, who made an unsuccessful bid

for the presidency.

Lim said the party constitution at present did not provide for the posts of president or chairman at state, division or branch levels to be automatically filled by the deputy president or vice-chairman if a vacancy occurred in mid-term.

"So we will amend the constitution at the general assembly this year to enable the deputy or vice-president to move up should a vacancy occur for whatever reason.

"If that is done, then next year I will hand the leadership of the party to my deputy who

will become acting president until the next party election."

Lim said his wish to step down was not something new as he had spoken about it as early as 2000 and he had prepared the party's members to accept the change.

Asked whether he would reconsider if called on to stay by the party delegates, Lim said that kind of decision would not be good for the party and he would not consider it.

As for his role in the party after stepping down, Lim said it is up to the new leadership to decide whether to appoint him as an advisor. - Bernama