

Gerakan leader endorses Anwar

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At a time when most of the BN top brass are expressing great confidence in winning the Permatang Pauh by-election, one top level Gerakan leader today risked party and BN ire by giving his stamp of approval for PKR's Anwar Ibrahim. MCPX That support came from Gerakan's Penang-based leader Dr Toh Kin Woon, an outspoken former state executive councillor when Penang was ruled by Gerakan-led BN before the March general election.

Toh not just expressed his support for Anwar, he also visited a PKR election operation room in Permatang Pasir, one of three state constituencies in Permatang Pauh, this evening.

Accompanied by a friend, Toh was welcomed to the operation room by several top level Pakatan Rakyat leaders, including Penang deputy chief minister Mohammad Fairus Khairuddin, Penang exco Law Choo Kiang, PKR vice-president Dr Lee Boon Chye and information chief Tian Chua. Anwar was however not present. A banner stating 'let us reform Malaysia together' was also placed at the room during Toh's brief visit.

When met later, Toh said his visit was to show his support for Anwar in the by-election.

"I am not speaking for my party, I am speaking for myself as an individual - I do support Anwar Ibrahim in this by-election. I am not actually supporting him too much as an individual but more on the movement that he leads.

"I feel if Anwar (is elected to) Parliament, the voices of the opposition will be stronger and the chances of strengthening the democracy and widening the democratic space will be better. For these reasons, I support him," said the academician-turned-politician.

'He has been very consistent'

The vocal politician stressed that he was not supporting Anwar-led PKR as a party but the movement and the cause which the PKR politician has been fighting for.

"He is leading the movement for transformation, greater democracy, equality and more openness in the society." "I think he has been very consistent and courageous, (and) I support the movement that he leads," Toh added.

The Gerakan leader was however coy when asked on the chances of BN candidate Arif Shah Omar Shah in the Aug 26 by-election.

"No comment. I'm just here to say why I'm here and the reason why I'm here is to support Anwar. Arif was my colleague in the state assembly," he said in referring to the BN man who is also a two-term Seberang Jaya state assemblyperson.

Asked on whether he feared of disciplinary action which could be taken against him for openly pledging support to the rival candidate, he replied: "When we decide to take individual action, we have to be prepared. Whatever that comes, we will face it."

He denied he has any immediate plans to quit Gerakan to join PKR, saying that "I will see how it goes". Rakyat supremacy

Toh also noted that he has retired from electoral politics and would like to join civil society. He said he has been consistent in supporting movements that will strengthen the civil society.

"(These movements must) strengthen the voices of moderation, against racism, for political freedom, a more just and equal society. Anwar has articulated all this," stressed Toh.

Meanwhile, Fairus - who is also PKR's Penanti state assemblyperson - welcomed Toh's support.

"We are pleased with this visit and hope it will inspire the rest in BN to look at the current political development that has to be based on the 'rakyat supremacy' and not racial politics," the Penang deputy chief minister said.