

Wong's quit decision surprises DAP leaders

PENANG, Thurs. - The resignation from the DAP of the MP for Tanjung, Mr Wong Hoong Keat who joined the MCA on Tuesday, has caught the DAP camp here off-guard.

His move, coming soon after being elected DAP State vice-chairman, confounded DAP officials here.

"I had not expected this," one top DAP State official admitted. "His resignation came as a surprise."

Mr Wong had kept his planned move a secret until he made his announcement on Tuesday. He crossed over to the MCA together with his brother, Mr Wong Hoong Yin.

Mr Wong said, however, he had no ill-will against DAP leaders. He had to quit because he could not agree with their policies.

He also said he was not leaving because of the present DAP crisis which had seen the expulsion of prominent DAP leaders.

Observers, however, felt that Mr Wong had been unhappy with the way the DAP leaders were handling the Crisis.



MR WONG... *could not agree with DAP policies*

To some, Mr Wong's move was not "too unexpected." During the DAP crisis, the expelled leaders had claimed that Mr Wong was with them.

But Mr Wong had tried to toe the party line. He did not defect then. Although he was subsequently elevated from the post of DAP State treasurer to vice-chairman, observers felt he was already unhappy in the party.

This was because Mr Wong, who joined the DAP from Pekemas in 1978, had been considered more like an "adopted son."

"He was looked on with distrust by some DAP officials, and was never fully accepted by them," said one DAP party insider.

It is believed the Penang DAP is now facing a problem finding leaders, following the defections and mass resignation of members.

POWER BASE

Its power base here has been severely eroded with the reduction of its State Assembly seats from five to two, and Parliamentary seats in the State from four to two.

Its two Parliamentary and two State seats in Penang are being held by State party chairman Karpal Singh, and his deputy, Mr Peter Paul Dason.

The three State and two Parliamentary seats the DAP lost through the defections were those held by Seow Hun Khim (MP for

Bukit Mertajam) Mr Chin Nyok Soo (State Assemblyman for Paya Terubong), Mr Wong Hoong Keat (MP for Tanjung), and Mr Ooi Kan Kwong (State Assemblyman for Kampung Kolam).

Except for Mr Ooi who joined the Gerakan, the others had opted for the MCA.

It would thus appear that the MCA's call for Chinese unity is gaining support. The DAP defectors who joined the MCA had all cited Chinese unity as one of the reasons for their switch.

Should the people go for the MCA's Chinese-unity call, the DAP, which appears to be unable to keep even its own house in order, may find itself badly scarred in the next elections.

Observers, however, felt a lot would also depend on MCA-Gerakan co-operation. If the two parties were to work closely together, the DAP could well be wiped out in Penang come election time.