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HEADLINE: DAP does an about-turn, decides to re-enter battle

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The DAP today announced its decision to "re-enter" the campaigning for the Lunas by-election, saying the move was made in the larger interest of the Opposition.

Its secretary-general Kerk Kim Hock said party chairman Lim Kit Siang would speak at a ceramah in Lunas tonight to mark the party's re-entry into the campaigning.

"I can confirm that Lim will tonight address voters at Taman Selasih, Lunas (Parti Keadilan Nasional's centre)," he said at the Parliament lobby here.

After its Penang assistant publicity secretary S. Neelamekan was replaced by Saifuddin Nasution Ismail of Keadilan to contest in the by-election, the DAP closed its operations centre as well as ceased campaigning as a sign of protest.

Saifuddin is in a three-cornered fight with Barisan Nasional's S. Anthonysamy and independent N. Letchmunan.

Among other party leaders expected to join the campaigning are national publicity chief Ronnie Liu, Cheras MP and national organising secretary Tan Kok Wai and Bukit Mertajam MP and Wanita chief Chong Eng.

Although the DAP had closed ranks with Keadilan, Kerk was quick to point out that it was only for the Lunas by-election.

"The decision was made to ensure victory for our candidate. Other issues affecting the front like DAP's position in it will be dealt with after the conclusion of the by-election."

He said the decision to help in the campaigning was reached following discussions between DAP and Keadilan leaders.

Kerk said it was also made in the light of Keadilan president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail's statement today on the need to address the issue of marginalisation of minorities in Malaysia.

Dr Wan Azizah said the party had consistently defended the rights and promoted the aspirations of minority communities in Malaysia.

On whether this decision meant the "cooling-off" period announced earlier was over, Kerk said it only concerned the debate on whether the party should remain in the front.

Asked whether Saifuddin now stood a better chance of winning, he said the decision augured well for the Opposition.

On the closed operation centre, he said in line with the decision, it should be re-activated despite polling being two days away.

GRAPHIC: Lunas by-election 2000.

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