

## **DAP moves closer to PKR with new Malay recruits**

**MalaysiaKini.com**

**January 3, 2012**

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COMMENT One swallow does not make a summer; neither does the entry of two former Umno stalwarts make the DAP a less Chinese dominant party.

NONE Still, the decision of former Pulau Manis assemblyman Mohd Ariff Sabri (left) of Umno and of Aspan Alias (below, right), formerly of Negeri Sembilan Umno, to join the DAP would go some distance in deflecting criticism that the party is a turnoff to Malays.

The DAP's Anthony Loke and Liew Chin Tong, two of the more personable MPs in the party, are to be congratulated on the success of their efforts at enlisting Sabri and Aspan to their cause.

In Johor, there are some PKR members who want to join DAP as a result of them being sidelined following their support of Zaid Ibrahim in the divisive contest for deputy president in the party's internal elections of late 2010.

NONE A degree of flexibility and consideration given to the fact of the seniority of these members in PKR could result in their accommodation in DAP in such manner that their seniority is preserved.

True, this may result in a scanting of hallowed traditions in the DAP, like service before selection as candidates for state and parliamentary seats, but if those wanting to join from PKR are from areas in Johor where the DAP had little or no presence, their entry would be a plus factor.

Also, their selection as candidates would not only weaken the claim that the DAP is anti-Malay, it would also spread its wings to areas where its presence has been threadbare.

### **Intra-Pakatan crossovers**

PKR cannot look askance at the DAP for allowing its former members to enlist with the latter.

Wasn't it PKR which allowed former DAP dissident and expelled member Wee Choo Keong to become its candidate for the Wangsa Maju seat where he was elected in the March 2008 general election?

Wee's subsequent crossing over to the independents' bench did no good to the practice of intra-coalition crossovers, but this kind of stuff happens in politics which makes the laying down of hard-and-fast rules in these matters a hazard-prone exercise.

Suffice, party-strengthening across racial lines within the ambit of an evolving coalition that nurtures aspirations to be the dominant one in Malaysian politics is something that should be encouraged.

The more the DAP sheds its Chinese-dominant image, the greater the likelihood of its ultimate merger with PKR.

This is not a prospect that could be realised in the near future, but if the DAP succeeds in attracting more Malays to its fold, the momentum towards merger with PKR would be inevitable.

If more Malays actually join and are seen to be comfortable in the DAP, it is certain that PKR would then become a less Malay-dominant party.

The syllogism of reduced Chinese dominance in DAP and watered down Malay dominance of PKR would result in the two parties' merger.

Problem of warlordism

True, one can get overly enamoured with these logical deductions from abstractions - the political arena, especially in racially and religiously diverse societies, tends to be inhospitable to such easy theorising.

It has to be conceded, though, that the shift in the templates in Malaysian politics as a consequence of the results of the last general election has given rise to such speculation.

The DAP would help bolster its multiracial image if it handles with panache the problem of warlords in its state chapters.

How it tackles this problem in its Perak wing would go a long way towards projecting the party as multiracial not only in rhetoric but also in reality.

NONEThe domination of Perak politics by the cousins, Ngeh Hoo Kam (far left) and Nga Kor Ming (far right), has already resulted in reduced activism on the part of its Batu Gajah MP Fong Po Kuan, who was a high-profile MP for the party in the 11th Parliament.

But after a bout of internecine feuding with the cousins, a disillusioned Fong has retreated to becoming a pale shadow of her former self.

DAP's MP for Ipoh Timor, M Kulasegaran, had also been thrown off-stride by the internal maneuvering of this pair.

True, all's fair and foul in intra-party politics but it is wise to remember that it was warlordism that brought down some of behemoths of party politics in the last century, like the Koumintang in pre-revolutionary China and the post-Nehru Congress in India.

Warlords breed sycophancy, mediocrity and, ultimately, corruption.

How the DAP handles the problem of warlords would go a longer way towards successful projection of it as a multiracial party than merely increasing the number of Malays in its slate of election candidates.

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