

Karpal's bile belittles the party
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COMMENT DAP chairperson Karpal Singh's continuing public display of dissent over decisions taken by juridical bodies within the party in respect of its deputy secretary-general P Ramasamy is surprising by any measure.

'Dissent' must rank as a modest description of Karpal's public deportment in the matter of Ramasamy's alleged violation of the rules of consultative process within the party.

dap convention shah alam 080112 karpal ramasamySelf-indulgent rancour may well be the more accurate phrase for Karpal's publicly-aired criticisms to which sections of the mainstream media have given predictably gleeful coverage.

Karpal's behaviour would be startling under normal circumstances; in the immediate prelude to a general election, it is nothing less than astonishing.

Until Karpal began to vent his spleen late last year over Ramasamy's presumption in naming individuals for selection as the party's candidates in the coming general election, the DAP appeared to be the most cohesive of the three component parties of the opposition Pakatan Rakyat.

The reasons for this were not far to find.

The DAP's allies, PAS and PKR, had problems that ran deeper than any the DAP appeared to be afflicted with: the one having to wrestle with a divide between its orthodox and liberal wings; the other vainly working to project depth in its leadership said to be lacking for reason of the mythic stature of its supremo.

In contrast, the DAP was coherent ideologically, and projected clarity and credibility in its chain of command.

Self-restraint prevents party fissures

This was not to say that the party did not sport the occasional bout of skirmishing within its ranks.

NONEIt did, as in the case of the contretemps over bookings for affordable housing in Penang raised by Jelutong MP Jeff Ooi (right).

But what skirmishes broke out were quickly doused, less from the efficacy of its in-house fire-fighting measures than from the restraint and good sense of those who initiated the squabbles.

Self-restraint prevents party fissures from metastasizing into schisms.

The fact this salutary trait was displayed by individuals relatively new to its ranks helped bolster the impression of a new maturity coursing through the DAP, no mean achievement by a party whose internal convulsions in the past had frightfully shriveling consequences.

Above all, the trait of deference to larger goals by setting aside minor exasperations suggested that the DAP was aware the general public's desire for political reform and change overrode all other considerations.

A united party is a sine qua non for inspiring voter confidence that 'DAP Boleh', in cahoots with its Pakatan allies.

This realisation of pressingly larger considerations was admirably displayed recently in the 'tailorgate' episode in Perak where the alleged misconduct of a former state executive councilor was brought before the party's juridical body, which then either settled or closed the matter.

Factions to the controversy could have opted for more public airing of dirty linen, like Karpal is doing now, but they chose the discretion of internal grumbling to the dubious valour of public disputation.

Why? A general election is expected and Perak is the battle ground for a close contest between the victims of an unjust ouster and its perpetrators.

Conspicuously absent from party fundraiser

No comparably bracing consideration appears to take hold of Karpal and his fellow disputation conferees, R Rayer and N Thanasekaran, perhaps because in Penang the DAP-led ruling coalition is in no apparent danger of losing in the polls.

All three disputants were conspicuously absent from the highly successful party fundraiser in Penang the week before, an omen of things to come.

penang dap convention karpal lim guan eng ramasamy By the end of the week, Karpal had gone public with his acrimony over the party disciplinary committee's decision not to find fault with Ramasamy over the trivial matter of a demonstration in which Ramasamy was alleged to have connived.

Lawyer Karpal now finds fault with the constitution of the disciplinary panel that decided the matter.

It would have been better if the complainants had voiced their doubts about its capacity for impartial conduct before the start of its deliberations rather than after.

Failing that, it would have still better if they reserved their sour losers' reservations for after the general election rather than before.

Best of all, of course, would have been if they simply dropped the matter or just chosen to pursue it discreetly within the party's internal channels.

A public airing at this stage unduly embarrasses the party, trivialises its seriousness as a contender for Putrajaya, and, more importantly, reflects sordidly on the stature of its long soldiering chairman.

