

## **DAP: Back PAS, PKR even if you think they're weak**

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**By Susan Loone**

DAP has to play a crucial role in ensuring that Penangites continue to vote for the coalition, particularly its allies PAS and PKR, despite a perceived lack of confidence and support for the two parties.

Komtar assemblyperson Ng Wei Aik said it was essential that the DAP continues to lead the Pakatan Rakyat government in Penang after the 13th general election.

NONEng (right), who heads the state DAP election preparation committee, said the party had to make the people aware that it the support of the Malay community was needed, through PAS and PKR, for Pakatan to continue ruling the state.

"Even if people throw all their support behind DAP, we cannot form a government without a strong Malay base... we will not be able to rule for more than 100 days," he warned.

"Some may perceive that these PAS and PKR are weak, but we need to tell Penangites that only by voting for these two parties as well can we reach Putrajaya," he added.

In March 2008, DAP contested 19 state seats in Penang and won all, while PKR fought in 16 (winning nine) and PAS took on five seats but won only one.

In the parliamentary seats, DAP stood in seven seats while PKR contested four and PAS, two. In total, the three parties won 29 out of 40 state seats and 11 out of 13 federal seats.

'Ultra-Chinese image'

Ng said by working closely with PAS and PKR, the DAP also hoped to strengthen its Malay support base and shed its ultra-Chinese image, a fodder for criticisms from its main opponent, Umno.

In return, PAS and PKR would be more willing to defend DAP's state leadership, especially when confronted with issues affecting Malay-Muslim matters.

This was evident in recent events where PAS state deputy commissioner and Parit Buntar MP Mujahid Yusuf Rawa backed Lim when he was accused of selling a plot of land reserved for a mosque in Bayan Mutiara.

However, even without PAS and PKR, the DAP has managed to recruit several top notch Malays, though it is yet to be proven if these personalities can pull in the much needed vote from the community.

Ng said the party would seriously consider fielding Malay candidates in the next general election, which is not due till May next year, but could even be called next month or in June.

NONEA local NGO, the Penang Malay Congress, feels it would be a strategic move for the DAP to field at least five Malay candidates in the coming election.

This is to prepare for the possibility that two PKR state exco members - Deputy Chief Minister I and Penanti assemblyperson Mansor Othman and Batu Maung assemblyperson Abdul Malik Abul Kassim - could fail to retain their seats.

It is believed Lim's political secretary Zairil Khir Johari (left), who is also executive director of Penang Institute, a think tank aligned to the DAP, would be fielded in an urban-Chinese majority seat such as

Pulau Tikus.

#### A combined state manifesto

The three parties in the Pakatan coalition in Penang are strengthening their working relationship and planning to launch a joint state manifesto soon.

Unlike Pakatan's common policy framework, the Buku Jingga, the state manifesto will focus on state policies that will be beneficial to all communities.

Ng said the manifesto would focus on burning issues such as affordable housing, physical and economic development, local government, Penang's green campaign and traffic management.

"We are also working on a combined election machinery in every state and parliament constituency and will go to the ground for the coming election, which will be the 'mother of all elections' and see an all-out war between Umno and Pakatan Rakyat, especially the DAP, in Penang," he said.

Pakatan, which seized the state government from BN in 2008, was bracing itself for a full blown battle with Umno, which would exploit racial and religious issues to the hilt, Ng added.

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