

**Perils and opportunity in the DAP beltway**  
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**By Terence Netto**

COMMENT Practically everyone who remembers Lim Kit Siang's announcement at a press conference days before the 12th general election that the poll was going to be the DAP adviser's last in a lengthy career would forgive him his current amnesia about it.

Poised as his party is to play an unprecedented role in a possible federal government with coalition partners PKR and PAS after GE13 plays out, it would be churlish to deny Malaysia's most durable oppositionist his tryst with the poacher-become-gamekeeper destiny.

NONE Few things in a tenaciously striving career are more gratifying than requited labour.

One recalls the irony of Dr Mahathir Mohamad's sometime dismissal of Lim's career as futile and useless at this time when a possible reversal of fortunes impends and the former gets to contemplate life's vicissitudes about which the poet AE Houseman cautioned: "And early though the laurel grows/It withers quicker than the rose."

Lim is poised on the brink of what must be a hugely satisfying culmination to a career (with a probable second deputy prime minister's post the jewel in the crown) which makes his decision about aspects of a finale a matter for the finest discretionary judgment.

They say reports of his leading a DAP charge for parliamentary and state spoils in Johor are greatly exaggerated.

Though there are good reasons to commend the charge, such as that the move would help Johor chief Dr Boo Cheng Hau tamp down factional troubles and enable the party to exploit rising voter discontent in an Umno bastion (how retributively satisfying that must be!) - besides of course a return for the Batu Pahat-born Lim to home territory - still, it is a step too far.

It would be better for Lim to set his valedictory sights on matters of graver import to the party's future.

One candidate-one seat policy

The decision by Penang DAP chief Chow Kon Yeow to give up the Tanjung parliamentary seat to concentrate on just his state seat and executive council duties provides the opening for Lim to effect a maneuver that would be more beneficial to DAP's long-term prospects. [Correction below]

NONE Chow's (left) relinquishment of the parliamentary seat means that Lim could return to Tanjung where he defeated Gerakan's Koh Tsu Koon in 1986 in DAP's first concerted push for the capture of Penang.

With recurrent eye trouble stemming from not very successful cataract surgery last year, Lim would possibly like to see out the end of his career in a place where he owns a house and where he savoured a rare triumph more than two decades ago.

Additionally, the relinquishing move by Chow, with the career-coda opening it provides Lim, would enable the DAP to institute a policy of one candidate-one seat, with an exception made for party secretary-general Lim Guan Eng, for its slate in the 13GE.

The one candidate-one seat policy, besides being expedient in the present circumstances in how it will deter the emergence of territorial barons, in Perak especially, would enable the DAP to broaden

opportunities for its potentials to be chosen as election candidates.

The party would thereby expand its support base and enhance its appeal across the country's racial divides.

The dampener to territorial barony the one candidate-one seat principle would cause is the more compelling reason why the policy should be instituted.

Flight to Johor

The party, as it grows, would be vulnerable to this malady, what with the possibility that municipal council elections will be a feature of the Malaysian political landscape in the near future.

Witness how the DAP MP for Batu Gajah, Fong Po Kuan, is eager to move from Perak to Johor to contest.

True, that would help her stay close to her husband who is the party's candidate for the Johor state seat of Bentayen, but the move is also owing to her frustrations at the manipulations of the Foochow warlords - the cousins, Ngeh Hoo Kam, MP for Beruas and state assemblyperson for Sitiawan, and Nga Kor Ming, MP for Taiping and ward representative for Pantai Remis.

fong po kuan front imageFong (left) is often the first DAP legislator present in Parliament when its proceedings begin each day and the last to leave.

Her assiduity is exemplary which makes her frustrations in the game of state politics a matter of concern to anyone seeking the long-term future of the DAP with a highly likely transition from being merely an opposition to a ruling party on the cards.

Her probable flight to Johor would not necessarily alleviate her predicament but the underlying reasons for it ought to be instructive to a party that must concerned to insulate itself against the perils of warlordism that brought down the Koumintang in China and in Taiwan.

This must be a priority consideration for a party durable like Lim Kit Siang who while on the cusp of an all-too-rare vindication of his career ought to spare some time contemplating Houseman's admonition about the transience of laurels.

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