

## **Ngeh and Kula's camp go at it again**

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GE13 WATCH Away from the media glare on BN and Pakatan Rakyat component parties jostling for right to contest in parliamentary seats, a similar tug-of-war is taking place in Perak DAP.

The belligerents are the divided into two camps - one led by Perak DAP chairperson Ngeh Khoo Ham (left) and another led by DAP vice-chairperson M Kulasegaran.

These two camps have been at it for quite awhile. The prize is control of Perak DAP, arguably the most organised and influential party in the Perak Pakatan coalition after the last general election.

DAP veteran Lim Kit Siang became the Ipoh Timur MP in 2004 and has been able to keep lid on the two camps. Now that he gone to fight a new front in Johor, hostilities have become increasingly apparent once again.

The last outbreak saw Kulasegaran claiming that Ngeh had been arbitrarily disqualifying branches set up by the former from voting in party elections. Ngeh had denied any abuse of power.

This time, the two camps are disagreeing over the candidates being fielded in several key seats.

Malaysiakini has been told by people in the inner circles of both camps that two candidates lists - one coming from Ngeh, another from Kula - were submitted to national leadership.

The lists were then scrutinised by a four-member committee comprising Kit Siang (right), party chairperson Karpal Singh, his deputy Tan Kok Wai and secretary-general Lim Guan Eng.

Since the committee is aware of the precarious "balance of power" in Perak DAP, they are still mulling the matter over, even though nomination day is just a week away.

Nga better chance in Kepayang

According to those in Kualasegaran's camp, the national leaders had wanted him to

lend his seniority to the Johor campaign and contest for the Segamat parliamentary seat.

However, the national leaders was said to have recanted because that would give Ngeh full control over Perak DAP, thus they are ordering Kulasegaran to defend the Ipoh Barat parliamentary seat, which he has held for two terms.

As for neighbouring Ipoh Timur, two candidates have been proposed - incumbent Canning assemblyperson Wong Kah Woh, who once worked in Ngeh's law firm, and incumbent Pasir Pinji assemblyperson Thomas Su who is far more senior but seen to be a deputy to Kulasegaran (left).

Newcomer Howard Lee has been identified to either replace Wong or Su in their respective state constituencies, depending on the outcome of the national leaders' decision.

Lee, who still speaks with a British accent after recently returning from abroad, is aligned to Ngeh's faction.

Back in Ipoh Barat, incumbent Kepayang assemblyperson Loke Chee Yan has chosen not to defend his seat, after winning the seat in 2008 with a meagre 490 votes.

According to those in Ngeh's camp, his cousin and second in command Nga Kor Ming wants to be fielded in Kepayang, while Kulasegaran wants to field his aide Cheong Chee Khing there.

The argument, according to Ngeh's camp, is that the eloquent, experienced and charismatic Nga would stand a better chance in this "dangerous" seat than newcomer Cheong.

'Will abide by party leadership's decision'

Both Ngeh and Kulasegaran's camp is also eyeing Bercham, also within the Ipoh Barat constituency, but incumbent Sum Cheok Leng, who is aligned to neither, wants to stay put.

Further north in Jalong, Ngeh's team is said to be keen on replacing incumbent state assemblyperson Leong Mee Meng with one of his own men.

Leong (left), who was brought in from Pahang in 2008 to help with Perak DAP's lack of suitable talent at the time, is said to be aligned to Kulasegaran.

Incumbent Aulong assemblyperson Yew Tian Hoe may also be on his way out, to make way for Leow Tai Yih, who is leading Nga's workers in Taiping parliamentary constituency, a seat held by Nga.

Yew is infamous for his poor public speaking ability, which he makes up for with his reputation as a hardworking local troubleshooter.

Although the distribution of seats appear to be skewed towards Ngeh's camp, representatives of Kulasegaran's camp said that they will abide by the national leadership's decision and promised not to sabotage their rivals.

"We will respect the final decision of the party leadership," said a source.

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