

DAP, PKR reinforce ethnic stereotypes in Penang line-up

MalaysiaKini.com

May 10, 2013

By Terence Netto

COMMENT Former Penang PKR chief and renegade MP for Bayan Baru, Zahrain Mohamed Hashim, is entitled to a pat on his back following the swearing-in of the Penang state executive council yesterday.

Zahrain, whose Bayan Baru parliamentary seat was regained by Sim Tze Tzin in an overall PKR GE13 performance in Penang in which the party's Chinese slate did surpassingly well, chided DAP's Lim Guan Eng in 2008 when the latter suggested that the three executive council seats for PKR be occupied by its Malay reps to give racial balance to a state cabinet overly laden with DAP's Chinese reps.

zahrain hashim parliament 180310 "We are a multiracial party, not a Malay party," was Zahrain's (left) tart reminder to Lim.

The admonition enabled Law Choo Kiang, assemblyperson for Bukit Tambun, to get into Chief Minister Guan Eng's state cabinet (2008-2013) on the PKR allocation, with responsibility for the agriculture portfolio.

The other two exco slots in the 2008-2013 cabinet were assigned to Deputy Chief Minister I Fairus Khairudin - the youthful rep for Penanti who turned out to be a disaster mitigated only by his resignation and eventual replacement by Mansor Othman - and Abdul Malik Abul Kassim, who should have been DCM I in the first place but his Muslim Indian status was seen by PKR central as a disqualifier in an overall scenario where DAP's Chinese dominance needed unalloyed Malay counterbalancing.

Law was odds-on to hold the same portfolio in the new cabinet that was sworn in yesterday, but last-minute lobbying by Chief Minister Lim on behalf of PKR rep for Batu Maung, Abdul Malik, saw the latter retained at the expense of Law.

As a sop, Law was appointed speaker of the state assembly, a role the mild-mannered deputy chief of Penang PKR would be hard put to assay as well as his predecessor, Abdul Halim Hussain, had done.

NONE Beaten yet again in GE13 in the Teluk Bahang seat where he had also lost narrowly in 2008, Halim had aspired to be appointed deputy chief minister I in Lim's new cabinet.

But that post went to Mohd Rashid Hasnon (left), an engineer who won the Pantai Jerejak seat that comes under Tze Tzin's parliamentary constituency.

With Rashid holding one executive seat by virtue of his DCM appointment, the other two seats for PKR in the state cabinet would have to go to another Malay legislator and a Chinese one, if PKR meant to adhere to the multiracialism that Zahrain had cause to chide Lim about.

Zahrain has last laugh

With an eye to the bleeding of a future DCM I, PKR central wanted newly elected rep for Seberang Jaya, Dr Afif Bahardin, a 28-year-old private medical practitioner, to occupy an exco seat.

This meant that the final PKR exco slot would have to go to Law, with the hard working Abdul Malik dispensed to make space for PKR's multiracialism.

NONEHere Lim, justifiably fond of Abdul Malik (right) because of the latter's admirable capacity for work and exemplary cultivation of his ward, intervened to lobby for the Batu Maung legislator's retention.

But Abdul Malik could only be retained at the expense of PKR's vaunted multiracialism which suits the DAP fine because that serves the cause of showing the broader public that there is no real place in PKR for its Chinese reps.

The DAP would like the Chinese public to know that it is the best political vehicle for the advancement of their aspirations, and that Chinese representation in parties like PKR is so much window dressing.

PKR central, stung by GE13 results that showed the party as having lost traction in the rural Malay heartlands, truckled up to Lim's lobbying and allowed Abdul Malik to take up the last PKR exco slot, leaving the consolation of the speaker's post to Law, a man whose unassuming and compliant nature guarantees there will be no public fallout from PKR's implied fall from its multiracial grace.

penang exco swearing in ceremony 090513 law choo kiangThe irony here lies in the fact that during Law's (left) execution of his agricultural portfolio, Penang's padi farmers, who are mostly Malay, raised the productive capacity per hectare of their farms to levels higher than neighbouring Kedah, which is known as the rice bowl of the country.

Also, all Penang PKR's Chinese candidates in GE13 won their seats with room to spare. Even their weakest candidate, Ong Chin Wen, who in the run-up to the election was in danger of being dropped, managed to beat Teng Chang Yeow, the BN state chief from Gerakan.

Somewhere in all this, Zahrain is having a laugh, DAP is enjoying a smirk and the Chinese cohort of Penang PKR has to swallow hard.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/229708>