

Dropped PKR councillors linked to 'tokong' controversy

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COMMENT Penang PKR's dropping of five municipal councillors, a couple for reason of suspected involvement in an episode last year that redounded to state chief Mansor Othman's deep embarrassment, purports to be periodic refreshment of personnel.

The claim of refreshment cannot be sustained because it is not altogether clear that the replacements can match the knowledge and analytical acuity of a couple of the dropped councillors possess.

lim guan eng and mansor othman at open houseThe latter have the ideas and vitality to propel the party forward but they are made to suffer the consequences stemming from the need to provide retributive satisfaction to Mansor who was singled by the incident that occurred in March last year.

It concerned the recording - and eventual ventilation - of derogatory remarks about Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng that Mansor was supposed to have made at a meeting between him and the Chinese leaders in the party.

The tape was uploaded on the net in June and became a hot potato during Aidilfitri celebrations in August.

The Chinese leaders of Penang PKR were upset at the prospect that the state seat of Pantai Jerejak, then held by Sim Tze Tzin who was to be shifted to contest the parliamentary ward of Bayan Baru (he won it handsomely in GE13), was headed for occupancy by a Malay.

NONEAt the meeting, Mansor (left), then Penang deputy chief minister (1), in an attempt to placate the Chinese wing over the probable loss of territorial domains, lurched into a denunciation of Lim, describing him as a 'tokong' (Chinese deity). More on the probable reason for this faux pas by Mansor later.

The feelings between the Chinese wing of Penang PKR and the DAP are akin to that between Umno and PAS: it ranges between barely concealed disdain and openly expressed loathing.

Unfortunately for Mansor, at the meeting a recording was made by a PKR malcontent present who was subsequently induced to upload the damaging stuff on

the net.

A chagrined Mansor roiled with embarrassment at the furore the matter caused when it came to light in August during the Hari Raya festivities.

Political lightweight

Lim shrewdly played the incident the way a partisan DAP stalwart would: portray the PKR Chinese wing as devious and not worth the bother.

Had Mansor not been the political lightweight that he was and continues to be, it is doubted that Lim would have been as conciliatory towards him as he was and is - even as recently as last week, Lim was maneuvering to see if he could make the now position-bereft Mansor, MP for Nibong Tebal, the Penang state assembly speaker.

NONEPKR's Law Choo Kiang was recommended for and eventually got the job (left), but only after Lim had tried to, first, get former speaker, Halim Hussain of PKR, retained and when that failed, to get the now unhappily underemployed Mansor installed in the chair.

There's nothing surprising about these maneuvers of Lim; as far as intra-coalition politics is concerned, it's par for the course.

It is only when he tries to say that the DAP is also a party for the Malays and what not, he stretches credulity somewhat, for in Penang and vis-à-vis the state chapter of PKR, at least, he wants the message conveyed to Chinese voters that PKR is not worth their while.

Presently, he has found in Mansor an unwitting aide in conveying the message.

Still smarting from the revealed episode of his faux pas last year when he was caught out denouncing Lim, Mansor has got his satisfaction by cutting out, as councillors, the people he suspected were behind the taping and uploading of his remarks.

Never mind that these people happen to be the best of the Chinese set of leaders in Penang PKR, and their relegation semaphores the message that in Penang, at least, the party is essentially for the Malays.

More important than whether Mansor actually said what he said about Lim was why he said it. This was the nub of the puzzle because he had, publicly at least, got

along well with Lim.

Eventually, speculation congealed around the theory that his derogatory comments were the fruit of an inability to keep up with the hyperactive CM who has a retinue of formidable advisers in newfangled DAP recruits Tony Pua and Lim Chin Tong, and the writer-researcher Ooi Kee Beng - all informal members of a DAP brain trust.

There are no comparable equivalents in Penang PKR. And there will not be so long as Penang PKR has the leadership it presently has.

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