

Boo says Johor DAP grassroots still want him

MalaysiaKini.com

Jan 7, 2014

COMMENT Incumbent three-term Johor DAP chair Dr Boo Cheng Hau has changed his mind about giving up on a leadership role in the party and is going for a seat in the state committee when polls are held on Jan 12.

"I have toured branches in the state and the feedback I got is that I should be around to complete the job," said the private practitioner to Malaysiakini when reached about his plans.

By "complete the job" Boo (right) meant the task of enabling the DAP, in collaboration with PAS and PKR, to take control of the southern state considered the bastion of Umno-BN until opposition inroads at last May's general election rendered that view untenable.

The opposition Pakatan Rakyat coalition of DAP, PAS and PKR won 18 seats in the Johor State Assembly at GE13, up threefold from a haul of six seats at GE12. Of the 18 seats, DAP won 13, PAS garnered four and PKR took one.

Boo said the drive for an opposition takeover of the Umno-BN stronghold was initiated well before the last general election which saw DAP bigwigs descend on the state to head a campaign to evict BN from mixed-raced seats.

The foray was dubbed the 'northern invasion', led by party adviser Lim Kit Siang who succeeded in beating incumbent Menteri Besar Ghani Othman for the Gelang Patah parliamentary seat.

Gelang Patah was one of four parliamentary seats DAP snatched at GE13, a gain of three over the GE12 haul of a solitary seat (Bakri).

Skudai assemblyperson Boo had been eyeing the Gelang Patah seat which he had fought hard to foil Chua Jui Meng from claiming for PKR but that effort was rendered moot by Kit Siang's intrusion into the Pakatan candidature stakes.

It was a hopeless situation for Boo, 'a damned if you do and damned if you don't' dilemma that must have left an undercurrent of resentment at the 'northern invasion'.

Impressive triumph

Principal gainer from the invasion was young Liew Chin Tong. The Klang-born political science graduate moved from the Bukit Bendera seat in Penang to contest Kluang in Johor.

He triumphed in impressive style and went on, in stirring fashion, to top the vote in the party's national polls, re-held last September on the directive of a nitpicking Registrar of Societies.

Recently, Liew has allowed that he is available for the chair's post in Johor DAP, but this is a step with shades of Khairy Jamaluddin (left) written all over it.

Like Liew, Khairy's star was ascendant in Umno a decade ago but eager party recognition of an aspirant's precocity is the prelude to overreach.

Unseemly haste in wanting to ascend the ladder led to mistakes prompted by hubris with the result that when his father-in-law prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi crashed, Khairy was left high and dry.

But talent can't be kept down for too long. A chastened Khairy has recovered and may yet put experience of the pitfalls of overreach to good use.

For Liew (right), the challenge may be of a subtler sort: what lessons to harvest from the mistakes of others and how prevent from being a mere cog in the wheels of others' ambitions.

The speculation is that Liew is being pushed to go for the Johor chairman's post by party bigwigs who took exception to Boo's lack of enthusiasm for the northern invasion.

If so, Liew's propellants are scanting the lessons of last month's DAP Penang polls where Malacca-born Lim Guan Eng's minions were dealt a mild rebuff from partisans of locally-minted barons.

Shoulder to the wheel

An old saw in politics is that 'all politics is local politics'. Paying due heed to this truism would require members of the northern brigade to recognise what work the 50-year Boo has done for Johor DAP over the last 20 years.

When the party was in the doldrums in the state in the 1990s, he put his shoulder steadily to the wheel and labored on.

Elected to the state committee in 1996, he began to work the ground in Skudai where his medical practice was known for its modestly-priced availability to taxi drivers and other members of the working class.

Rising popularity stemming from popular recognition of his communitarian ethic enabled Boo to reverse a 10,000-vote deficit he incurred for the Skudai seat at the 2004 general election in the subsequent polls in 2008.

The reversal established Skudai as Boo's bailiwick and because the ward is in Gelang Patah, led him to eye the latter seat as the next stage of his ascent pace GE13.

But those espousing the macro-picture for the DAP at GE13 supervened and Boo found himself left to mind the local score in Skudai while the northern invasion ran its course, successfully as it turned out.

Now the invaders want to complete their takeover of Johor DAP which may be a step too far, if indeed it's true that all politics is local politics.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source: <http://beta.malaysiakini.com/news/251105>