



Kula's stalled quit move a brief reprieve
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ANALYSIS So it's finally out - the Perak DAP cousins Ngeh Hoo Kam and Nga Kor Ming are a bone in the throat of the party and, by extension, the Pakatan Rakyat coalition.

DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang and Teresa Kok barely managed to head off colleague M Kulasegaran's anticipated announcement this morning in Ipoh that he was quitting his state vice-chairman's post.

Kit Siang, Teresa and national vice-president Tan Tok Wai sped to Ipoh last night and closeted with Kula, the Ipoh Barat MP, until the wee hours.

They implored him to give them a week to mediate the crisis in Perak DAP, believed to have been caused by the cousins' mafia-approach to state politics.

Kula, 53, a party veteran with 23 years' service under his belt, was not going to leave the DAP; he had scheduled the press conference this morning to say that he was quitting his state deputy chairman's post.

The intervention of Kit Siang, a friend and mentor of Kula's over the length of the time the younger man has been in politics, was critical to persuading Kula to hold off for a week.

Kula is leaving for overseas tonight and would be away a week.

Kula had had enough of the Ngeh-Nga cousins' factionalism which he claimed conflicted with the party's political philosophy. He felt the factionalism bred authoritarianism and a herd mentality among members aligned to it.

Kula walked out of a meeting last night that was called to ease rising tensions between two factions, one led by Kula and the other by the cousins.

The Ipoh mayor post

These tensions had reached a new pitch of intensity in recent weeks when Kula got wind of a story that his discontent with the cousins' was attributed to his failure to obtain the mayor of Ipoh post.



Kula had wanted to be mayor and raised at last night's meeting the question of why the post was not demanded by the DAP as one that the party deserved to get by virtue of its electoral dominance in Ipoh. In the event, the post was filled by a former civil servant.

The contretemps over the post was an added irritant and not the cause of Kula's exasperation with the cousins.

The cousins had undermined Kula by closing down some DAP branches in the state that were supportive of Kula and were reviving dormant ones aligned to them.



Kula had outpolled the cousins in state party elections two years ago, surprising Ngeh and Nga with his tally that had reflected the lawyer's popularity among the dominantly Chinese members of the party.

This was galling to the cousins but not surprising to long time watchers of the state DAP who had observed that the high-handedness of the cousins, particularly the reported arrogance of the younger Nga, was rubbing many the wrong way.

There were mutterings against the cousins, not only among state DAP representatives but also Pakatan ones, during the 11 months of the Pakatan coalition's administration of Perak between March 2008 and till February last year.

During all that time, rumours swirled that Pakatan Menteri Besar Nizar Jamaluddin was being manipulated by the cousins. His critics in Umno openly spoke of it as fact.

When two PKR state assemblypersons and a DAP one switched to being independents early this year, Nizar's government was deposed.

One candidate, one seat

In the inevitable aftermath of recrimination, fingers were pointed at the cousins, both members of the state executive council, as being culpable for the defections.

Nizar, though, uttered not a word to confirm or deny rumours of the cousins' hold on him or of their machinations.

In recent weeks, a proposal by national chairman and Bukit Gelugor MP Karpal Singh that the DAP should adopt for the next general election a policy of one candidate for one seat, was viewed as aimed at cutting the Ngeh-Nga cousins down to size. The two are not only state exco members but also MPs.

Karpal said Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng ought to be the only exemption to the rule, as he is required to represent the state in the national parliament.

That the DAP has to resort to subterfuges of this kind to cut down the cousins suggests that the phenomenon of state war lords is something of a headache for a party that cherishes egalitarian ideals.

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