

Teresa: Avoid PKR-style infighting
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Internal power tussles in DAP Selangor's coming party polls this weekend could very well sink Pakatan Rakyat's bid to retain the state and wrest Putrajaya from BN, said DAP national organising secretary Teresa Kok.

Taking the cue from PKR's recently concluded party polls, she stressed that any public spat among the 50 candidates contesting for the 15 posts up for grabs in DAP Selangor's coming election would only make the entire Pakatan coalition look "ugly".

NONE"Maybe I shouldn't criticise PKR, but because (of) their elections process, certain members come out to create scenes, and (this was) picked up by the BN media. It has affected PKR's image to a certain extent," she said in a Malaysiakini exclusive interview yesterday.

"Every member, every councillor, every JKKK (village security and development committee) member, ketua kampung, can really pull the party down or make Pakatan look ugly... it is very important for us to be seen united."

Kok (above), who just recently transferred her membership from DAP Federal Territories to DAP Selangor, appealed to the 50 candidates to stick to low-profile campaigns in the run-up to the weekend state polls, to avoid as much as possible, the bad press as experienced by PKR.

NONETHOUGH she admitted that mudslinging and factionalism are normal phenomena that are part and parcel of any party election season, Kok could not help but lament that this is a time when divisions start to surface.

"Whether we like it or not, we are a political party. Every two years we have our state elections and every three years our national elections. This is a democratic process we have to go through.

"But after everyone is elected, we have to work together. The state (party) elections are not as important as the general elections, and are we ready? That is a more important scenario," she said, speaking to the media for the first time on the state party polls after weeks of media speculation on a potential faction war in Selangor DAP.

Exercise in contradictions?

Kok's emphasis on unity however seems to run counter to her recent activities, particularly her participation in a party fund-raising dinner in Serdang last night, when she, along with 12 other prospective candidates, were for the first time formally introduced as members of the much touted Unity team.

While none from the faction, purportedly lead by Kok, made any reference to the looming state party polls at the event, they did not deny the open accusation by the dinner's organising committee chair Chong Hoon Ming, of "a small group" that is "causing a nuisance in the shadows".

NONEChong's tirade is seen as an attack on the opposing Justice Reform team, which is

rumoured to be led by Selangor state assembly speaker Teng Chang Khim (left) and Sekinchan assemblyperson Ng Suee Lim, with support from sacked state organising secretary Tee Boon Hock.

Barely two hours earlier during the interview, Kok pointed out that it is unfair to put labels on the perceived internal stand-off between the two factions, when nobody had even spoken openly about it.

"He (Teng) also did not make any public statements. All of this (speculation) is hearsay that surfaced in the media. They use the term veterans versus young guns... I'm older than (incumbent Selangor DAP chief) Ean Yong (Hian Wah) by over a decade. Am I a young gun or veteran?," she quipped.

No favouritism in party

Kok also panned complaints of lopsided decision making by party leaders, particularly in the case of Tee who was sacked from the party for nepotism while serving as a Klang councillor, for signing a recommendation letter favouring a company owned by his son.

NONWhile she empathised with Tee, Kok noted that the party's central executive committee had no choice but to uphold the disciplinary committee's decision to sack him as his actions went against the competency, accountability and transparency system advocated by the party's national leadership.

"If certain members put the blame on the DAP state committee over Tee's sacking, and also against (party advisor Lim) Kit Siang and (secretary-general Lim) Guan Eng for taking sides, they are barking up the wrong tree. We have never been consulted (on the disciplinary board's decision)," she said.

Kok also defended the party's decision to go with younger party members to contest in the last general election, saying that they were struggling to find "qualified" candidates while at the same time there was a clear demand for "new blood" to represent the party and the people.

hannah yeoh interview 110608 03"When we look at 2008, we did not see many old members of quality or who were qualified, so we decided to go with younger candidates like Tony Pua, Hannah Yeoh (left) and Teo Nie Ching.

"In Kinrara for example, not many of those who were qualified wanted to contest because they were not confident of winning, so we were working with that kind of backdrop," she said of her state constituency.

Kok however does not see this weekend's polls getting out of hand, claiming that there are actually no major issues rocking the Selangor DAP boat.

She said the various complaints against the current leadership are mere campaign fodder that does not even see the light of day outside of election season.

"Some of the complaints are very localised. Whenever I meet members, I just tell them to vote for those who have worked hard for the party," she said.

