

'Datuk' title boon or bane for Teng?

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Rumours are swirling among the DAP ranks that the party's central committee member and chief dissident Teng Chang Khim will be conferred a state award which will carry the title 'Datuk'.

But there is an unwritten rule in DAP that its members must not accept state titles in order to maintain the party's egalitarian and grassroots image.

NONE In Teng's (right) case, it is understood that the award was in fact recommended by the palace, which has reserved one award for a serving politician on its recommendation list for this year.

However, the timing of the investiture ceremony, scheduled for Dec 11 in conjunction with Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah's birthday, is causing widespread chatter among Selangor DAP members, who will go to polls on Sunday to elect the new state leadership.

Teng's rivals - dubbed the Unity Team - are claiming that the state and national party leaderships were not consulted on the matter and by accepting the purported award, he would be breaking party tradition.

A Unity Team source told Malaysiakini that it was initially thought that Teng had managed to seek a title and this would be a major blow to his credibility as a grassroots leader.

Better to maintain silence

dap graftbuster pc 230409 lim lip eng 2Federal Territories DAP secretary Lim Lip Eng (left), an ally of the Unity Team, also made an apparent reference to this on his Facebook page last night.

"Will you support if a DAP member is conferred a datukship by Sultan?" asked Lim on his Facebook status update, to which most replies from the public were surprisingly in the affirmative.

But further checks by the Unity Team revealed that Teng's award was recommended by the palace in recognition of his capacity as the state legislative assembly speaker, any attempt to ask him to reject the said award will constitute as an insult to the palace.

Furthermore, if this was made an issue, it would provide Teng's reputation a boost if the rumours were true because it would mean that he had royal recognition for his work.

"Thus, it's better not to talk about this at all during the campaign," said a Unity Team source.

Precedent set in Perak

The Unity Team is attempting to stave off a strong challenge by Teng, who leads a team labeled by the Chinese media as the Justice Reform Group, for the state DAP leadership.

dap pc on keshvinder quit party 160610 ngeh koo hamIn 2008, Perak DAP chief Ngeh Koo

Ham (left) was awarded the title 'datuk' by Perak Sultan Azlan Shah by virtue of him being the state senior exco member.

The title was not turned down because it was recommended by the palace instead of the state government. However, Ngeh was said to have informed the state and national party leadership before the investiture ceremony.

In Teng's case, it is understood that the party was in the dark over the matter.

A Justice Reform Group source said that should the Unity Team bring up the award as a campaign issue against Teng, it would prove that they are "desperate".

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