

And the DAP's negotiators are...
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Beh Lih Yi

DAP has announced the line-up of its negotiation teams that will meet with opposition ally Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) to decide the distribution of seats for the forthcoming general election.

Secretary-general Lim Guan Eng made the announcement at the party headquarters in Petaling Jaya today, barely 24 hours after PKR named two top-level teams for the seat talks.

Lim said the central executive committee (CEC) - the party's highest decision-making body - met last night and appointed national organising secretary Tan Kok Wai and publicity chief Teresa Kok to lead the negotiations.

Tan will head a team that covers Penang, Kedah, Perak, Selangor and Kuala Lumpur, while Kok will be responsible for Pahang, Negri Sembilan, Malacca, Johor, Sabah and Sarawak.

Lim said the state-based approach is a "new mechanism" for the DAP.

"It's important to have all states represented or it (the negotiation) will not be that efficient," he told a press conference.

Tan's team consists of vice-chairperson M Kula Segaran, national treasurer Fong Kui Lun, Penang chief Chow Kon Yeow, Wanita chief Chong Eng, Perak chief Ngeh Koo Ham and CEC member Ronnie Liu.

Kok's team includes vice-chairperson Wong Ho Leng, deputy secretary-general Ahmad Ton, CEC members Leong Ngah Ngah, Teng Chang Khim and A Sivanesan, Youth deputy chief Chong Chieng Jen and secretary Loke Siew Fook.

Ground rules first

Lim expressed hope that the newly-formed teams will negotiate with PKR to work towards a straight fight with the ruling Barisan Nasional.

The DAP now predicts that the polls will be held between November this year and March next year.

On when the negotiations will start, Lim said he would meet with PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim and president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail in two weeks to go over the "ground rules and mechanism".

He declined to elaborate on the number of possible overlapping seats, although PKR has put this at between 20 and 25 for parliamentary seats.

"I don't think it is a friendly gesture for us to start talking about overlapping seats before the two parties start talking," Lim said..

"It's better we discuss things behind closed doors than to engage in a media game which is not constructive."

The DAP is reportedly eyeing 54 parliamentary and 114 state seats. It contested 44 parliamentary and 104 state seats in the 2004 election.

Lim also claimed the party has discovered that 800 voters from a housing estate in Taman Silibin, Ipoh, have been transferred out of the Ipoh Barat parliamentary constituency to the Batu Gajah constituency.

He alleged the transfer was done to prevent Kula Segaran, the DAP's Ipoh Barat MP, from retaining the seat. Kula Segaran won with a slim majority of 598 votes previously.

The Batu Gajah parliamentary constituency is held by DAP's Fong Po Kuan but she won with an overwhelming 7,927-vote majority in 2004.

"As Ipoh Barat was won by 598 votes, such a transfer of an entire voting district with 800 voters to Batu Gajah has deep implications for our efforts to retain Ipoh Barat," said Lim.

He vowed to mount a "strong challenge" to the Election Commission to reinstate the 800 voters.

Also present at the press conference were Lim's economic adviser Tony Pua and election strategy adviser Liew Chin Tong.

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