

# DAP crisis not as serious as it looks

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ON the surface, it looks like the DAP is embroiled in yet another crisis as its Negri Sembilan vice-chief has quit the party and the Selangor committee has sacked its chief — all within a week.

On Monday last week, Negri Sembilan DAP vice-chairman Lim Fui Ming, also Bahau state assemblyman, resigned after claiming that he was marginalised by other committee members.

Last Friday, the party's Selangor chairman, Ong Chee Keng, was ousted in a vote of no-confidence.

The state party's secretary, Ean Yong Hian Wah, took over as chairman.

It seems the DAP is going through another round of political crisis as it did in the 1990s when some leaders tried to oust leader Lim Kit Siang. Is the current problem as bad as it was then? Political analyst Khoo Kay Peng does not think so.

"Conflict is not new for DAP. When it's close to a general election year, some factions within the party will try to jostle for positions. This time, it's just some minor problems at the state level."

He said the DAP was not a grassroots-based party and therefore, problems in Negri Sembilan and Selangor would not have serious repercussions elsewhere in the country.

While Khoo does not make much of the situation, Ong — who was kicked out by his colleagues in Selangor — alleged that it was a move to install secretary-general Lim Guan Eng as state chairman.

Unhappy with his removal through a vote of no-confidence, he said he would submit a complaint to the central executive committee (CEC). Guan Eng welcomed Ong's plan to refer the matter to the CEC, but dismissed claims that he would take over Selangor DAP.

He admitted that the idea was mooted about a year ago, but he had rejected the offer, saying that he had confidence in the Selangor state committee.

"It's unfair to blame me. I hope Ong will use internal mechanisms to resolve the problem," he said.

"I also hope Ong will look at the larger party interests and that he's still committed to the party."

DAP insiders believe the Selangor state committee members were unhappy with what they perceived as Ong's lack of leadership, allowing rivals MCA and Gerakan to take up issues that could benefit the party.

In last year's case of 11 men whose heads were shaven by police for alleged involvement in gambling, Selangor DAP members were upset with Ong for declining to take up the matter. MCA championed the issue.

"Ong has been the state chairman since 2004, but he didn't move the party. When some committee members asked him to step down, he refused," said a party insider.

"When they couldn't tolerate his no-action attitude, they called for an emergency meeting and ousted him."

Ong is said to have commanded support from seven of the 40 branches in Selangor.

Of the 20 Selangor DAP committee members, 14 of them were against Ong.

Will Ean Yong, the new state leader, be better?

"Based on the current sentiment, anyone is better than Ong," said another DAP source.

Still, some DAP leaders are worried that Ong's departure could affect the party's image. In the case of events in Negri Sembilan, however, many appeared unfazed.

Political analyst Liew Chin Tong said it was more of a *merajuk* (feeling slighted) case as the 61-year-old Fui Ming was unhappy with committee and ordinary members for not supporting him. Although Fui Ming, who joined the party from the MCA in 1988, was voted as Bahau state assemblyman due to his personal popularity, Chin said the DAP's strong support in the area helped him a lot.

"DAP still has a good chance of retaining the Bahau seat in the next general election," he added.

"Unless the situation deteriorates and affects the national leadership, I don't think the DAP will face serious problems," said Khoo, who is aligned with a think-tank linked to the Gerakan.