Troubles far from over

DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng says Karpal Singh and Dr P. Ramasamy have buried the hatchet and all is well again in the party. However, recent incidents say otherwise.

The tussle in Penang between the two DAP leaders, Karpal Singh and Dr P. Ramasamy, continues via their supporters and intermediaries despite Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng’s announcement on Dec 15 that the spat has been settled.

After a meeting with Karpal that was also attended by party adviser Lim Kit Siang and life adviser Dr Chen Man Hin, Guan Eng announced that all was fine and the issue buried.

The two had a fallout after Dr Ramasamy announced that four or five Indian candidates were “sure to contest” in the general election.

That statement set off a “warlord-godfather” clash, with Karpal, who as DAP chairman, would have the final say on candidates.

Dr Ramasamy, who is Penang Deputy Chief Minister II, is a political novice who benefited from the 2008 tsunami after leaving UKM in a huff. He thought political science for nearly 30 years there.

Karpal, however, is a DAP veteran since 1978, and is a respected leader by aspiring DAP candidates.

But two demonstrations – one in support of Dr Ramasamy and the other for Karpal – poured cold water over Lim’s announcement that the two had settled their differences.

The demonstrations indicated that the tussle is far from over.

Party sources said the fact that Guan Eng had roped in Kit Siang and Dr Chen to deal with Karpal also indicates that he alone, as party secretary-general, has been unable to deal with the veteran lawyer.

Karpal also lambasted the disciplinary committee that heard the inquiry against Dr Ramasamy and cleared him.

A lot of the unhappiness among Dr Ramasamy’s supporters has to do with Karpal’s insistence that four members of the Hindu Endowment...
Board - a state government body set up to regulate temples and its charities - resign.

The four appointed by Dr Ramasamy to the board and the Penang Appeals Board were dropped by DAP when their appointments expired on March 31.

Karpal had said that the four - K. Mangaleswary, Dr K. Anbalakan, S. Gunalan and E. Jothi - would be dropped “as soon as possible”.

Mangaleswary, the party’s Juru branch chairman and state Wanita vice-chairman, is a close confidant of Dr Ramasamy. She was previously with the MIC.

Seri Delima assemblyman R.S.N. Rayer and Bagan Dalam assemblyman A. Thanasekaran, both lawyers, are dead set against Mangaleswary and her rise in the state DAP.

Karpal had said that Mangaleswary “suddenly came out of nowhere” and was propelled to various important positions, which he deemed was wrong.

However, other Indian DAP leaders say the appointments to the board is a prerogative of the Penang Government, and that Karpal, who is not a member of the state administration, cannot demand their resignations.

It goes without saying that when state DAP leaders fight among themselves, as is the case in Penang, the party performs poorly in the general election.

The DAP is the strongest of the three Pakatan parties, but internal dissension is rearing its ugly head not only in Penang, but also in Perak, Selangor and Johor – all states crucial to the party’s performance.

At least five seats are likely to fall due to infighting in Selangor, while in Perak, DAP national vice-chairman and Ipoh Barat MP M. Kulasegaran was rejected in the state party polls by a rival team led by Taiping MP Nga Kor Ming.

While the DAP appears strong, its weakness really is the brutal infighting fuelled by ambition, greed and ego after 2008.