

# WHY THE MCA

THE MIC forms the third leg of the old Alliance and is the smallest of the triumvirate. Ever since its formation it has been beset with bickerings, quarrels, fist fights at meetings, and even court cases. Its strength has been dissipated by these internecine struggles.

When I interviewed Datuk Samy Vellu last August, I bluntly told him that the MIC was the laughing stock of Malaysians of all races and was the court jester of Malaysian politics.

He gave me the assurance that all that would stop and that the general assembly due in Penang later in the year would be held in peace and harmony.

I am glad that for once an MIC president was able to enforce his edict and since then the MIC has been preparing quietly for the coming elections. It has been allocated only four federal seats to contest and in 1978 it won in Sungei Siput, Teluk Kemang, Pelabuhan Kelang but lost in Damansara.

Pelabuhan Kelang used to be an MIC stronghold under the late Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam although he was given a fright by Lee Lam Thye in 1969. But now with the demise of Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam the MIC is not so strong there and the seat may well be lost to the DAP particularly if PAS splits the Malay vote.

Both Datuk Samy Vellu in Sg. Siput and Datuk K. Pathmanaban in Teluk Kemang look safe. But Damansara is a Chinese majority seat and the MIC would be well advised to exchange it with the MCA.

Unlike the other components of the Barisan in Peninsular Malaysia the MIC is fortunate in that it does not have too many claimants to the four federal seats it has been allocated. At state level the MIC is represented in most state assemblies and there will be some jockeying for seats but nothing like the clamour that had plagued the other bigger component parties of the Barisan. It will go into the coming general election fairly united and well prepared for the fray.

The Gerakan held its general assembly towards the end of last year. It was a tame affair as compared with the fierce struggle for leadership in 1979 when Dr Lim Chong Eu decided to relinquish the leadership and it was contested by Datuk Dr Lim Keng Yaik and Datuk Paul Leong.

Dr Lim Chong Eu, towards the end of the contest, came out openly ill supported of Datuk Paul Leong but it was Datuk Dr Lim Keng Yaik who won. This led to a little split in the party but the new president has since united the party behind him.

In the middle of last year the strength of the party was boosted by the arrival of Datuk Michael Chen who left the MCA to join the Gerakan and was appointed vice-president.

Both Datuk Dr Lim Keng Yaik and Datuk Michael Chen have been former Ministers of new villages and both of them set about opening new branches all over the country.

The Gerakan now has notable strength in Johore, Negri Sembilan, Kedah and Malacca. It has also gone to Kelantan, Trengganu and Pahang where before it had no branches at all. Hence their clamour to be allowed to contest in these areas as well.

The Gerakan was established as a multi-racial party and it remained so when Dr Syed Hussein Alates, Ve. Veerappen, V. David, Yeoh Teck Chye and I together with many others were in the party.

But when we left it became another edition of the UDP — Dr Lim Chong Eu's old party. Now it still proclaims itself to be a multi-racial party but there is no doubt that it is a Chinese-based party now — hence its feud with the MCA.

I have already touched on the animosity between the MCA and the Gerakan and despite the efforts of Musa and company, no one seems to be able to unite the Gordian Knot.

The other problem lies in Penang. There Dr Lim Chong Eu must be nearing the end of his long career in politics but who is to succeed him there? There does

not seem to be anyone in sight in Penang from the Gerakan that is acceptable to the public as a Chief Minister.

One good candidate would be Dr Goh Cheng Teik but he has no experience in state politics and this may be a handicap. But in Alliance and Barisan circles it has happened before — when a newcomer was plucked out of the blue to serve as MB or CM and if Dr Goh Cheng Teik is pitchforked into that position he will be no better or no worse off than many other MBs or CMs before him. But he has experience of federal politics, this being his second term as a deputy minister.

Up to the time we broke away from the Gerakan it was truly a multi-racial party and had fair support from the labour movement in this country. It was spoken of even in Malay circles as a possible alternative to the Alliance.

I have had many top civil servants and Malays telling me so but after my friends and I left the Gerakan and I joined the Barisan, it lost that image, and being in the Barisan it could not become an alternative government. It is no secret that my friends and I resisted all attempts to join the Alliance. We were not interested in becoming glorified ministers but alter we left, the Gerakan joined the Barisan.

## POWER

Tun Hj. Razak also brought the PPP into the Barisan. But the PPP had long passed the zenith or its power with the demise of D.R. Seenivasagam.

In 1974 even S.P. Seenivasagam lost badly in Menglembu and the only survivor was Su Liang Yu in Bruas.

In 1978, he, too, lost to the DAP and for the first time since 1959 the PPP was not represented in Parliament. In 1980 its sole State Assemblyman in Chempor, Perak crossed over to the Gerakan and now it has no representatives in either the Dewan Rakyat or at state level.

The PPP is now headed by S.I. Rajah and it has been racked by internal dissension. Most of their quarrels have been patched up and the PPP is confident of its chances in the coming elections. But I feel that PPP in its present state of disunity has lost its credibility and will be given a thrashing by the DAP should they meet in the next election.

As I have mentioned before, Sabah is the only exception where both the ruling party — the Berjaya — and the main opposition Usno are members of the Barisan.

The Usno was the first to be accepted into the Barisan being the ruling party until 1974. It is no secret that the breakaway of Berjaya was engineered from Kuala Lumpur. It was also accepted into the Barisan.

It swept the polls in 1974 and again in 1978. In the state elections, it won in 1975 and in 1980 it annihilated the Usno despite the return of Tun Mustapha to lead the party. It will be a long time before the Usno regains its pristine glory, if ever.

Usno is the oldest political party in Sabah, and exemplifies the truism that power corrupts and abso-

# SHOULD GET DAMANSARA

lute power corrupts absolutely.

After winning the most seats in the federal elections of 1964, it started to swallow up the main opposition party — UPKO — and then it held absolute sway in the State. It crushed all forms of opposition until it became too big for its boots and that frightened the Centre.

As I have related before, the Centre engineered the breakaway Berjaya which won the state elections of 1975 and 1980. After the defeat of 1975, Tun Mustapha resigned as chairman of the party and was succeeded by Tan Sri Hj. Mohamed Said bin Keruak. But after the crushing defeat of Usno in the State elections of 1980 he too resigned and was in turn succeeded by Tun Mustapha.

However, this form of musical chairs is not going to restore the credibility of the party in Sabah and in the coming federal elections the Usno may well once again be annihilated by the Berjaya.

The Berjaya is a breakaway of Usno with the addition of new blood. Unlike Usno which is a Muslim-based party, Berjaya is a multi-racial and multi-religious party. Thus although the Chief Minister is a Muslim his deputy is a Roman Catholic and there are some Chinese in the State Cabinet.

It has gone from strength to strength since its formation but it must not let power go to its head or else it will meet the same fate as its predecessor — Usno.

The previous Government carried discrimination too far. Another feature of Sabah politics is the enormous sums spent during elections.

The Pekemas contested a few constituencies in the 1975 elections and it had difficulty in finding the deposit for its candidates. None of its candidates could afford to spend more than \$3,000 each. Both Usno and Berjaya think nothing of spending \$100,000 on a candidate.

Towards the end of the campaign, money in brand new notes was carried in sacks to buy votes! There were no election petition to declare the elections null and void on the ground of spending more than the legal limit allowed! I have no doubt that money will be spent just as freely in the coming general elections.

It was in Sarawak that the idea of coalition was first tried out at state level. The 1970 state elections left the three main parties, Party Bumiputra, Supp and Snap, evenly poised with 8, 12, 12 seats each. Secret negotiations were carried between all these three parties, and Party Bumiputra and the Supp formed the state coalition government.

Later before the 1974 elections Snap was brought into the Barisan fold and that triumvirate has ruled Sarawak since 1972. In the 1981 state elections a newcomer appeared on the scene in Sarawak, namely the DAP, but in the State elections that year, it did not win a single seat. This year the DAP will no doubt



Penang Chief Minister Dr Lim Chang Ee... who will succeed him?

have another go but it will be difficult for the DAP to move into the interior of Sarawak.

The Barisan in Sarawak is a triumvirate consisting of the Parti Pesaka Bumiputra Bersatu (PBB) which has been formed in 1975 by the merger of the old Bumiputra Party and the Pesaka Party.

For a long time the chairman of the party was Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Abdul Rahman Yacob who was also the Chief Minister. But in 1981 he resigned as Chief Minister and became Governor. He was succeeded by Datuk Patinggi Amar Taib Mohamad who resigned his Cabinet post as well as his Federal seat. He will now lead the Barisan forces into battle in Sarawak.

Although in 1978 the Barisan lost one seat, Lambir, to Sapo, it is likely that it will once again sweep the board this year although the DAP must not be taken lightly. It may well snatch one or two seats from the Barisan.

## MULTI-RACIAL

The Supp is one of the oldest parties in Sarawak and until 1970 it was the main opposition in Sarawak. But in 1970 it joined Party Bumiputra to form the coalition government and its long-time chairman, Tan Sri Ong Kee Hui joined the Federal Cabinet and is today the oldest Cabinet Minister.

The Supp is multi-racial and multi-religious. Although most of its members are Chinese it has a fair number of Ibans among its membership and some have even been elected to the Dewan Rakyat. There is always a Supp Deputy Chief Minister and Tan Sri Ong Kee Hui's long career both in the Cabinet and outside as well must be coming to an end soon. If he does retire from politics his most likely successor as a Cabinet Minister is Dr Wong Soon Kai who was a contemporary of the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir while at college and in the university in Singapore. He was a brilliant student and should make a good Cabinet Minister. He is as present a

State Minister and the Supp should do well in the coming elections.

The Snap is the main Iban Party in Sarawak although it is multi-racial and multi-religious. Indeed its present chairman is Datuk James Wong who in the days when Snap was in the opposition had been detained under the ISA for 16 months. He had been a Deputy Chief Minister of Sarawak. The party had been revitalised under the previous secretary-general Datuk Leo Moggie, now a Federal Minister.

There is a group of young Ibans who have provided a powerful thrust in the party and in the State Government. Snap should do well in the coming general elections in Sarawak.

The Berjaya was the latest party to join the Barisan and it was a breakaway of PAS just as PAS was an offshoot of the Umno in the early Fifties.

Its president, Senator Hj. Mohamed Nasir had become MB of Kelantan just before the break. He refused to resign when called upon to do so by the party and as violence threatened to unleash in Kelantan the Centre stepped in, declared a State of Emergency in Kelantan and ruled by decree.

Tan Sri Hashim Aman, a civil servant, now chief secretary to the Cabinet, was appointed Supremo until the state elections were held on March 1978. In the state elections that followed, Umno swept the board, winning 23 of the 36 contested seats. Berjaya won 11 and PAS a beggarly two seats.

Then for the first time in Peninsular Malaysia, Umno and Berjaya formed a state coalition government with Datuk Mohamed Yacob as MB.

Earlier Datuk Hj. Mohamed Nasir had been appointed to the Senate and was appointed Minister without Portfolio in the Prime Minister's Department. Since 1978 the Berjaya has not been very active although it had just roped in Prof. Syed Hussin Alatas as its latest recruit of prominence. As a result, it may well receive a thrashing from PAS when the next round comes along.