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MCA's top two on healing mission

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The new MCA leadership is speeding up the process of fortifying unity in the party with a series of State party conventions that will kick off next Sunday.

Party president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting, who will open the State MCA conventions in a month-long tour, will be accompanied by deputy president Datuk Chan Kong Choy.

This will be their first official tour of duty together since taking over as president and deputy president respectively on May 23.

Ong has confirmed that he will officiate at all conventions - a task traditionally performed by the party president but also attended by the deputy and most central committee members.

"One of the main themes of the conventions is party unity, especially after a three-year split. Ka Ting and Kong Choy have pledged to use the conventions to help the party close ranks," said a party insider.

The source added that although top leaders appeared to be united since the changing of guard on May 23, the grassroots had not recovered fully from the rivalry.

He also said that some top MCA leaders had gained from the recent Cabinet reshuffle while others were already holding senior party and government positions but many grassroots members had not benefited despite the three-year split.

"There is a lot of convincing to do. Party leaders on the ground need to be reminded about the coming general election and that the party cannot afford to be split anymore," he added.

Another issue likely to be debated during the conventions, he said, would be MCA's preparations for the next general election, including candidates and seats allocations among the Barisan Nasional component parties.

The State conventions kick off in Johor on July 6, followed by Kelantan and Terengganu (July 11), Malacca (July 12), Perak (July 13), the Federal Territory (July 17), Sabah (July 20), Kedah and Perlis (July 25), Pahang (July 27), Penang (Aug 1), Selangor (July 2) and Negri Sembilan (Aug 3).

The MCA annual general assembly will be held on Aug 10 and is expected to be officiated at by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. The Youth AGM will be opened by Chan and the Wanita by secretary-general Tan Sri Dr Ting Chew Peh.

Both wings will hold their meetings separately on Aug 9.

MCA had been split into Team A and Team B for three years until immediate past president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and deputy president Datuk Seri Lim Ah Lek stepped down on May 23.

Ong and Chan took over the same day.