

**GE13: MCA stares at game of survival**  
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**By Andrew Ong**

It has been a patchy ride for MCA since the 2008 general election, where the party saw its representation in the Dewan Rakyat halved followed by a protracted power struggle which left the party severely bruised.

Unlike previous years, the 58th MCA annual general meeting which concluded today carried a far different mood and tone.

yap pian hon interview 160608 05From party leaders down to party delegates, speeches centred on how the worst was over for MCA and the focus now was on improving the party's performance in the upcoming general election.

Party veteran Yap Pian Hon said he believes that the delegates' speeches show that they are now upbeat and this reflects how the morale among grassroots is on a high note.

"The grassroots hope that the party can now revive itself," said Yap, who is the Selangor BN publicity chief.

Yap attributed the morale boost to party president Dr Chua Soi Lek's efforts in making the various warring party factions close ranks and providing a clear plan to face the election.

Punishing PAS through DAP

In his policy speech, Chua said that arch-rival DAP was full of hot air and that its coalition partner PAS, which is adamant on pursuing its Islamic state police, was its Achilles' Heel.

mca agm 021011 01Chua said it was time for Chinese voters to punish PAS by not voting for the DAP, taking a page out of the latter's book, who in 2008 asked Chinese voters to strike Umno by not voting for MCA.

The debate about PAS' plans to impose hudud law in Kelantan came about last month, after PAS spiritual leader Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat blamed Umno for blocking its attempts to do so.

PAS retook Kelantan in 1990 and later passed the Kelantan Syariah Criminal Code Enactment 1993, which codifies hudud penalties for certain offences.

In recent weeks, MCA leaders have seized the opportunity to attack DAP for failing to curb PAS, warning of the dire ramifications to the freedoms of non-Muslims.

hududPAS' Islamic state plans were blamed for hampering DAP's chances in the 1999 general election, which led the party to leave the opposition's then fledgling 'Barisan Alternatif'.

Although MCA's anti-hudud position was successful in 1999, it remains to be seen whether it will divert Chinese votes from DAP, especially since it was used with little effect during the 16 by-elections over the past three years.

Hudud: An impetus for MCA?

As expected, the hudud issue was heavily discussed during the MCA AGM, with delegates taking turns to blast DAP for selling out on the Chinese by failing to rein in PAS.

One delegate, Bellawanis chief Tee Hooi Ling, even produced a sideshow presentation highlighting newsclippings reporting PAS' adamantness on hudud, complete with pictures of a severed hand and a Middle Easterner subjected to lashings across his bare back.

gan ping sieu on sport betting 250610 02MCA vice-president Gan Ping Sieu (left) said delegates are irked with PAS for using the religious card to stem its flagging Malay support, adding that this kind of politics was dangerous for the country.

"Members are angry also because the DAP has been going around the country doing window-dressing for PAS by saying they are more liberal now and are led by professionals.

"But when the hudud issue (was reignited) they are unable to give a reasonable response," said Gan.

Unlike PAS' Islamic state goals, Gan said that BN has a far more palatable offering for the populace in form of the Najib administration's transformation plans and legislative reforms.

"All reforms and transformation requires strong political will... Our job is to make sure that the premier has enough consensus to push through," he said.

#### Game of survival

Although the hudud controversy is an oft-repeated topic, many delegates also reminded the party that the upcoming general election was a matter of the party's survival.

stanley koh interview 150108 upfrontYap said that party grassroots, especially in the present Pakatan-ruled states, understand the stakes because they have tasted defeat before.

"In Selangor, we have nothing. No resources. We don't even have a village chief," said Yap.

Long-time party observer Stanley Koh (right) said that the morale among party delegates was significantly higher this year because they are gearing for war, which is a zero sum game.

"As the Chinese say, as long as one doesn't see the coffin, tears will not flow. The members realise that this is a fight for survival.

"They are an army cornered at a cliff. They can either jump, or fight. Now, they are choosing to fight," said Koh, who had a long stint as MCA's research department head.