

Can MCA survive in a modern world?

MalaysiaKini.com

February 15, 2012

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This evening, the National Geographic Conservation Series featured the alligator garfish of Florida. The narrator asked, "Can this ancient alligator garfish survive in a modern world?"

As someone who has been a member of MCA for more than 40 years, I cannot help but also ask, "Can MCA survive in a modern world?"

Like the carnivorous fish with formidable teeth and powerful jaws but can only swallow small fishes in the Florida Everglades, like conservationists who disproved the misconception of the alligator nature of the fish, I would like to explore the extent of accuracy when this party claims to represent the Chinese in Malaysia.

Unlike the garfish appetite for variety in the Everglades of Florida, MCA chose only the Chinese to be members.

Today, where most political parties, whether in the BN or Opposition, also represent Chinese interests of Malaysia, how has this non-inclusive policy continue to serve the party's political objectives?

In business jargon, the bottom line of the party had dropped from 29 seats in a 192-seat Dewan Rakyat in 1999 to merely 15 seats in the current 222-seat in 2008. In terms of the number of votes received by the party it was merely 10.35 percent of total votes in 2008.

What do the Chinese want?

Answers are written on the wall: recognition of identity. Majority of the Chinese in Malaysia are into business. A friend texted me a moment ago that he almost died of a certain medical overdose. Less than an hour later, he was in the bank depositing money to buy shares.

While in the US 27-year old Mark Zuckerberg was expecting billions from Facebook IPO, a Chinese businessman in Kuala Lumpur twice his age forecasted that the same IPO exercise would shower him with millions of ringgit as well.

These are the sort of frontiers Malaysia Chinese businessmen speak of in a modern world: drawing on business opportunities big and small, be it at Miami or New York, Beijing or Shanghai, Bangalore or Papua New Guinea.

PM as the Driver of Change

The lifestyles of people have changed. The way business is done has changed. In response to the business sector's expectations, the Prime Minister's efforts to aggressively change public services has gone nationwide because this arm of the government regulates the private sector which in turn, is the driver for economic growth in the country.

No one should doubt the prime minister's efforts in trying his best to deliver what the Chinese in Malaysia wants whether for facilitating business, strengthening education, perpetuating culture or entrenching heritage.

From soft whispers into the ears of component party leaders of the BN to making glaring broad headlines, he has called for less time-consuming methods in solving the people's problems with the warning, "The government should not stick to administrative traditions... as conventional methods can yield

unsatisfactory results".

At the far end of drafting business policies, regulations and guidelines are the politicians who sit in Parliament, with the crème-de-la-crème also occupying posh offices in Putrajaya, all 222 of them. We should expect only the best.

New Political Order

The 2008 General Elections saw political energy flying off pages of Malaysiakini into everyone's windows. Politics is no longer a political party game. The other explanation for this new phenomenon is that these political parties could no longer claim they command representation of all or majority of its members. Expressing political discord is a mere click away - just tweet it!

How have political systems responded towards such social changes?

Singapore saw this new wave way back in 1989. By a constitutional amendment the position of Nominated MPs (NMP) was introduced to engage the best brains of the Republic to think for the rest of the inhabitants of the island and the extended borders as well (acquired through land reclamation and building new islands).

The present group of nine NMPs consists of two associate professors, three managing directors, one CEO of a volunteers and community foundation, an ED of an institute of international affairs, the secretary of a worker's union and a full time television personnel.

Then there are the three non-constituency MPs - members of opposition parties who were appointed to Parliament although they lost in the general election.

NMPs and NCMPs together make up 12 percent of Singapore's Parliament - with the single objective of strengthening the legitimacy of the legislature and to raise public confidence in the country's political system.

There had been several observations that politics in a multi-racial environment have moved away from racial alignments. How far this can go depends on the party leaders, particularly those who already have a fair spread of multi-racial members. For the race-based parties, their next moves must be strategic or, they will be left in denial of a different kind.

With this in mind, indifference, rather than fear, exuberated on recalling MCA President's threat that his party would not accept government administrative positions should MCA fare badly in GE13.

No conservation team for MCA

The garfish conservation team painstakingly trapped whatever numbers of fish they could, tagged them and checked their health before releasing them back to the Everglades. Unfortunately, there is no counterpart of this kind in the case of MCA.

It is a organisation with true ancient Chinese emperor style: a new king steps down and the entire court of ministers and high (also middle and junior) officials would be changed. The process of cultivating a power base would start all over again.

But the Generation X and the Gen Y'ers could not see the flashing lights and bright sparks of new born political icons who could creatively solve their daily problems.

Were these the results of political power being kept in traditional repositories for too long?

Obviously a St. Valentine's Day candlelight dinner was meant to calm these pent-up nerves and overstressed emotional tensions. And to bring sense back where politics had taken flight and gone

elsewhere to redefine itself and to find elsewhere to settle.

The present set of MCA representatives in the Government need to table their report cards if they wish to retain their positions after the coming GE.

Although the alligator garfish had yet to find new use to its mouthful of idle powerful teeth, the same cannot be said about the MCA.

Members were challenged to resign should they disagree with the leaders. In a modern world which speaks the language of global collaboration and maximum integration of resources, leadership is not made of this.

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