

Analyst: Both Chua and Lim to emerge as winners
MalaysiaKini.com
February 17,2012
Wong Teck Chi

Whatever the outcome of tomorrow's debate between MCA president Dr Chua Soi Lek and DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng, both the leaders are expected to emerge as winners.

For debating in an unfriendly ground, Lim can already claim credit for his courage, while Chua gets an opportunity to rebuild his reputation with the Chinese community, which has been tarnished by the sex video scandal, political commentator Joe Liaw says.

Organised by MCA think tank Institute of Strategic Analysis and Policy Research (Insap) and Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute (Asli), Liaw (right) described the debate as a "greatly crafted" strategic arrangement.

This is because it is a rare occasion in MCA history for the party chief to directly contest or debate against a DAP leader.

The only exception was the fourth MCA president, Lee San Choon, who defeated DAP chairman Chen Man Hing in the then opposition stronghold of Seremban for the parliamentary seat in the 1982 general election.

"The debate will motivate the party and it also gives a significant symbolic meaning for Chua, who is a party president without an official post and made a comeback after the sex video scandal."

Liaw believes tomorrow's debate will help to dilute Chua's disgraceful record and push him to a higher political ground in facing future challenges.

As for Lim, Liaw said the Penang chief minister has already won praises for debating in an unfriendly ground, an opportunity that has not been enjoyed by other DAP heavyweights, including Lim Kit Siang and Karpal Singh.

"Despite knowing that it is a hostile environment, Lim still chose to join the debate."

Debate topic gives MCA the upper hand

Some commentators, however, say the debate may not move the Chinese ground back to the ruling coalition, as Chua wants.

Khoo Kay Peng, who was formerly with a Gerakan think-tank, denounced the title of the debate, "Chinese at a Crossroads: Is the Two-Party System Becoming a Two-Race System?" as "racist" and "stupid".

malaysiakini discussion 050208 khoo kay peng "It is crafted out because of a political motive. It is slumping towards MCA.

"They are just implying that if we vote for Pakatan Rakyat, the Chinese will be in the opposition while Malays will be in the government. This is ridiculous," Khoo (right) said.

Whatever the situation, he said, there were still some Chinese who would vote for the BN and some Malays would vote for Pakatan, so it is wrong to suggest there will be a two-race system.

The debate should instead focus on national issues such as corruption and reform.

"We should talk about the country. Malaysia is now at the crossroad... This shows the quality of organiser."

Khoo also believes that the MCA needs to do more to win the support of the Chinese community.

"Chua's party should push BN to a becoming a trully multiracial party, no more race-based parties."

BN a one-party hegemony

Political scientist Wong Chin Huat (left) also concurred, saying that it would be difficult for Chua to put a persuasive argument that a two-party system would lead to a two-race system.

"It is more possbile that one coalition is formed by different ethnic groups, while another coalition is formed by a mono-ethnic group, but not a two-race system.

"Besides, the real problem is actually one-party dominance (by Umno)... Even MCA could not stop (the then Umno Youth chief) Hishammuddin Hussein from raising his 'keris' when they won big in the 2004 general election," Wong said.

A steering committee member of Bersih 2.0 Wong hopes that tomorrow's debate will encourage many more debates between BN and Pakatan, especially during the general election.

"This is in line with Bersih's demand that all parties should have free and fair access to the media."

Oposition leader Anwar Ibrahim has on several occasions challenged Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak for a debate.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/189433>