

Hall erupts as MCA, DAP titans face off
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Two of the most prominent Chinese politicians are going head-to-head in a rare televised debate with MCA president Chua Soi Lek facing off DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng.

The debate, titled 'Chinese at a political crossroads: Is the two-party system becoming a two-race system?', is conducted in Chinese.

Tensions runs high the packed ballroom at the Berjaya Hotel, Kuala Lumpur with a 600-strong crowd.

About 200 more who failed to secure entry passes are viewing following the debate through a big screen outside the hall (left).

LIVE REPORTS

4.55pm: The ballroom erupts as rival supporters chant stands up to chant the respective names of the debators as they take the stage.

5pm: Moderator Tan Ah Chai, chief executive officer of the Kuala Lumpur-Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall, kicks off the session by explaining the rules.

For the opening speeches, each debator will be allowed to speak for eight minutes.

5.02pm: The duo draw steps up to the moderator's podium to lots enclosed in a envelope, to choose the first speaker. Chua Soi Lek will go first.

Debate Chua Soi Lek5.05pm: After March 8, 2008. DAP has been practising the politics of hatred, says Chua.

He adds DAP has changed and is now teaming up with PAS, which wants to implement a theocratic state. He says DAP cannot stop PAS.

"DAP is just talking big," said Chua, triggering the first major applause from the floor, albeit from the MCA side.

He backs up his argument by stating that Kedah practice gender segregation while PAS is opposing to cinemas in Bangi, Selangor.

5.07pm: DAP likes to tell the Chinese that voting the opposition would improve living standards, pointing to how a DAP candidate can become a chief minister of Penang, says Chua.

Chua says DAP was giving false hopes to the Chinese that such a situation can happen in other states too.

5.10pm: Chua says that in multi-cultural country, Malaysians cannot support PAS because of its Islamic state agenda.

"Who is PAS' biggest ally?" asks Chua, to which the MCA crowd shouts in unison "DAP!".

5.12pm: It's now Lim Guan Eng's turn.

He thanks the organisers for organising the debate but says that what the public wants to see is a debate

between PM Najib Razak and Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim.

Debate Lim Guan Eng 5.14pm: "We in Pakatan Rakyat don't make use of each other. Our concern is how the public makes use of us.

"We aren't against the Malays. We aren't against the Chinese. We are against corruption," says Lim, whipping the Pakatan crowd into a frenzy.

5.16pm: "DAP does not recognise Malay supremacy. We recognise supremacy of the people," says Lim.

He argues that Umno leaders cannot have this sort of battlecry, while their chief opponent Anwar Ibrahim has done so.

Lim adds that Pakatan was willing to do what BN refuses to do, such as declaring their assets and fighting corruption.

"This is what we call a two-party system," says Lim, with his supporters punctuating his remark with wild applause.

5.20pm: The debate goes into the second round, with the moderator posing a question: The last election result shows that society is split into two sides. "How will you gain the support from the other side?"

Chua is up first where he said that DAP will not service constituencies that it loses.

"Even their office will disappear," says Chua, and his supporters cries out in "yes" in unison.

Chua concludes that a two-party system was merely political slogan.

Moderator Tang Ah Chai (left) takes questions from the floor. Most questions appear to be coming from MCA supporters but Lim is all smiles.

5.28pm: A minor controversy erupts as Pakatan supporters lining up at a microphone on the other side of the ballroom complain to the moderator that no questions were taken from their side.

The moderator however brushes aside the complaint and asks Chua to respond to the earlier set of questions asked by the MCA supporters.

5.36pm: The moderator announces another 10 minutes for questions from the floor, possibly to address the earlier error.

The next session involves speakers posing a question to each other.

Lim gets the ball rolling by asking what MCA thinks of its leaders being nabbed over the PKFZ (Port Klang Free Zone) scandal and not Umno leaders.

Chua replies that Lim is taking a racial route.

"He is asking why Chinese people are being arrested but not a Malay?" said Chua.

Chua says unlike others, MCA will not resort to street demonstrations to defend someone because it believes that the justice system is fair.

5.40pm: Chua's question is next. He wants to know if Pakatan's economic policy can help Malaysia become a high-income society.

Lim says that using Penang as an example, it is making sure that the state government is making money.

Among others, Lim said that his governance is prudent and it has an open-tender system.

"This has allowed us to make money every year, which is distributed back to the public," says Lim.

He says that if Malaysia can really tackle corruption more money can be saved, and Penang is a prime example.

5.45pm: A second round of questions is being taken from the floor, including some from the Pakatan supporters side.

Pakatan supporters are still not satisfied as most questions came from MCA supporters who attack Lim on a range of questions from PAS' policies and Penang's performance.

5.50pm: Tension in the ballroom is very thick as Lim attempts to answer questions from the floor. The MCA supporters are heckling him constantly, agitating the Pakatan crowd.

5.55pm: Now it's Chua turn to answer questions from the floor and do a winding-up.

However, Chua choose to address a point raised in Lim's wind-up speech. Lim had said that the questions which should be asked if whether MCA would stand up to Umno, pointing out that for MCA president Ong Tee Keat had once famously said that MCA was left with bread crumbs from Umno.

Chua dismisses the remark made by Ong, stating that he is irrelevant to MCA.

lim guan eng chua soi lek debate press conference "We took him down in less than a year (he was in power)," said Chua, triggering cheers from both side of the divide.

6.05pm: The debate has come to a close with Chua taking the initiative to shake Lim's hand. As the debate ends, the crowd again erupts in chants of the respective speaker's name.

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