

MCA young guns to take on Pakatan top guns?

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By Lee Way Loon

The MCA looks set to deploy a team of young candidates to take difficult seats in the upcoming general election.

Well-placed party sources told Malaysiakini that it is likely that one-third of candidates will comprise fresh young faces.

A source in Selangor MCA revealed that state liaison committees have nominated their list of candidates which will be scrutinised by the central leadership.

The source said a decision is expected by next month.

It is learned that among those proposed by Selangor MCA are the state Beliawanis chief Jessie Ooi, national Beliawanis deputy chief Nicole Wong and Cheras MCA division public speaking club head Steve Teoh.

NONEDespite her embarrassing outburst 'live' on television during the MCA-DAP debate last month, Ooi (right) is understood to have the backing of the party's top leaders.

Sources said some leaders believe that her minor gaffe was actually beneficially to her because she is now more well known in her area of Selayang, compared to the incumbent MP.

Like Ooi, Wong and Teoh have all been trained in public speaking by the Beliawanis and public speaking club, and have been working their respective areas - Selayang, Seputeh and Cheras - for some time.

National MCA public speaking club president Tan Jui Thong, when contacted, said a substantial number of candidates are expected to make the cut, while another source said at least 10 club members have been nominated.

The party is also expected to field well known public figures with no political background, despite the fact that this experiment had failed miserably in 2008.

For instance, TV personality Victor Gu had been roped in to contest in Damansara Utama, which was considered a relatively safe seat. He was thrashed by a virtual unknown from DAP.

mca chew hong lingFor the upcoming polls, one name being mentioned is that of liver donor, professional emcee and motivational speaker Chew Hoong Ling (left).

Chew, 32, is best known for donating 60 percent of her liver in 2009 to a teenage cancer sufferer who she did not even know.

Word has it that the party is eyeing her as a potential candidate in Petaling Jaya Utara against DAP heavyweight Tony Pua.

From preliminary information received from MCA, it appears that all the young guns will be fielded in difficult seats, as part of an "all or nothing" strategy.

For example, Seputeh is considered a heavily fortified DAP stronghold. The incumbent Teresa Kok set a national record in 2008 by scoring a majority of 36,492 votes.

New vs old

But it will not all be a bed of roses for MCA's upstarts because they are likely to face resistance from local warlords who may differ with the central leadership on candidate selection.

For example, banners have been strung up in OUG and Jalan Kelang Lama within the Seputeh constituency calling for Banie Chin to be made a candidate.

The banners are often placed near Wong's Chinese New Year banners.

NONEChin, the Seputeh MCA division vice-chairperson, had contested the seat in 2004 but was thrashed by Kok, who too a 11,503-vote majority.

It was learnt that Chin is among the candidates shortlisted by the Seputeh division.

When contacted, he said he is aware of the banners, adding that the grassroots are against "paratroopers" or what is commonly termed "parachute candidates".

"I thank the Seputeh societies for supporting me. We are going to lose badly if we field a paratrooper again (like in 2008)," he said.

Chin stressed that he will support any candidate fielded by MCA, even if he is not chosen to contest.

NONE"I campaigned during the 2008 election although we had a paratrooper then.

"As a party member, I will not sabotage the party but I hope the central leadership can consider the voices of the grassroots," he said.

However, Seputeh MCA division chief Chai Kim Sen (left) opined that opposition towards "parachute candidates" is not something exclusive to MCA.

"Umno, MCA, DAP and PKR - they are all the same. The grassroots will be against such candidates," said Chai, who is also the MCA Youth national secretary-general.

In 2008, MCA won only 15 of the 45 parliamentary seats it contested, down from 31 won in the 2004 polls.

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