

New cabinet a prelude to MCA infighting

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By Lee Way Loon

ANALYSIS While many had expected the exclusion of MCA representatives in the newly-minted cabinet, the announcement by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak on Wednesday may just be a prelude to a new round of MCA infighting.

The Chinese-based component party of BN contested 37 parliament and 90 state seats in the May 5 general election, but only won seven and 11 seats respectively.

In the wake of the disastrous defeat, MCA announced that it would stick to its decision not to accept any government post in keeping with the party's resolution at its annual general meetings (AGMs) in 2011 and 2012.

NONE However, many believed that MCA will return to the cabinet if Chua (right in photo) is ousted by his ambitious rivals, who would pin the blame for the party's loss as well as the AGM resolutions on the embattled party chief.

Even Najib has anticipated the move by reserving the transport minister's post for MCA. The ministry is temporary helmed by Defence Minister Hishammuddin Hussein until MCA has resolved the issue.

This is seen as indicating that MCA will soon overturn its earlier AGM resolutions.

Anti-Chua camps sharpening knives

MCA will hold its party election later this year. With incumbent deputy president Liow Tiong Lai, Youth chief Wee Ka Siong and former secretary-general Ong Ka Chuan winning in the general election, the three MPs could team up to mount a challenge against Chua.

llg chinese forum 110511 phoon wing keong In an interview with KiniTV, political scientist Phoon Wing Keong (left) said if Chua insists on party leaders rejecting government posts, it will intensify the party infighting.

"I believe the other MCA MPs will not accept this. If Chua persists, the main agenda for the party election would be on whether MCA should return to the cabinet," he said.

However, even if MCA rejoins the cabinet, it is unlikely to retain its four ministers

and seven deputy ministers' posts in the previous cabinet.

In the new cabinet list unveiled by Najib this week, only one ministerial post was set aside for MCA.

The latest talk suggests that BN has also reserved one or two deputy ministers' posts for the Chinese-based party.

Who cares?

Whatever the outcome, it appears that whether MCA joins the cabinet or not is no longer a matter of great concern for the general public, in particular the Chinese community.

Phoon said except for some Chinese associations and companies, the Chinese community is not nervous over the absence of MCA ministers in the cabinet.

"The public think that Chinese ministers will unable to change the unfair government policies anyway.

NONE"But for many Chinese associations and companies, they can still get some resources from the ministries, such as funds or facilities," said Phoon.

Another commentator, Tang Ah Chai (right), said Najib may want to convey a message - that the BN government can continue to function even without MCA being part of the government.

"If the new cabinet and government function well, the future of MCA would be even more precarious as it is no longer seen as essential in the ruling coalition," said Tang, who is also the CEO of the Kuala Lumpur Chinese Assembly Hall.

Big mistake

According to him, MCA made the mistake of not thinking through the consequences of its 'stay out of government' resolution.

"We can see that when MCA decided not to take any government post, it was essentially moved by emotions. What kind of message does it want to convey? Punish the voters?"

However, he said the closing of some of MCA service centres following the party's defeat in the 13th general election could be an even bigger mistake.

According to Sin Chew Daily, former MCA deputy president Lee Kim Sai warned that MCA would be redundant as a party if it does not rejoin the cabinet and no longer services the people.

Nevertheless, MCA remains a formidable party. Tang said MCA still holds assets amounting to billions of ringgit, and has millions of party members as well as a solid machinery on the ground.

However, he said MCA's reaction to its disastrous GE13 outing was like cutting off its own nose to spite its face.

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