

## **Gan: MCA needs a valiant chief to end party's debacle**

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**By Lee Way Loon & Kow Kwan Yee**

INTERVIEW After experiencing electoral defeat in the last general election, MCA vice-president Gan Ping Sieu said the party needs a valiant chief to end its debacle.

Gan, who is vying for a higher post in the coming party election this December, either the party president or deputy president, as well as the appointed secretary-general, said the new leadership must be strong-willed and be able to stand firm on the party's principles.

"What has been the weakness of MCA is that we overly emphasise on the operation of constituency management in terms of public-service-oriented work for the locals.

NONE "We are quiet and equivocal, ambiguous on public stands, about some national issues in particular, especially issues involving other ministries. We don't express ourselves well enough and we're busy with our own ministerial works," he said.

In an exclusive interview with Malaysiakini and KiniTV, Gan said it was important for a political party to have a clear stand on what it stood for.

"If you want to be a leader, you want to represent the people, it is important for us to show our stand on public issues. For any issue, not only communal issues but national and public issues, MCA as a political party must express its stands openly and vocally," he stressed.

'MCA not submissive'

Asked what he could offer to the party if he was elected to a high post, Gan said he wanted to assert MCA's stands in BN.

He had admitted that MCA had been giving the public impression that the party is subservient to Umno particularly.

However, asked if he meant that MCA is factually submissive, Gan denied this, saying that it was just because MCA was not doing well enough in terms of political articulation.

"For me, instead of blaming the leaders in Umno, I would suggest that we should

review ourselves. Are we trying to marginalise ourselves or have we done our part to stand up over public issues?"

"In fact, strictly speaking, MCA has always been seen as a party, we overly emphasise on communal issues, but there are not many Chinese communal issues," he said.

He explained that predominantly, the Chinese communal issue was about education while the rest were all national issues like healthcare, housing, public transport, governance, abuses, corruption, public safety and crime that cut across all ethnic communities.

"MCA is seen as not articulating well enough about all these issues and therefore we suffer a lot from the impression that we are a communal party," said Gan.

'Be more outspoken'

While several MCA leaders had started to become outspoken by criticising some national policies after suffering electoral defeat, Gan said it was important for the party leaders to voice their dissenting opinion openly.

In fact, being dissentive was not a new thing for MCA as its former president Ong Tee Keat and the current president Chua Soi Lek were both regarded as outspoken leaders but despite that, the party was still unable to gain massive support in the last two general elections.

NONETo this, Gan said besides the party president, most of the central leaders did not express clear stands and the people had questioned MCA's position when national issues were widely discussed.

"Under the new political landscape, if we still continue to marginalise ourselves when it comes to party politics or working with BN component parties, then I'm very concerned that this would be very bad," he said.

He explained that the BN spirit was about basic mutual respect and that was the only interest of the coalition, and MCA would always be suffering if the spirit was not embraced.

"If any of the component parties are seen to be coercive, then the coalition or the alliance will be very weak. And MCA does give such an impression to most of the people so we must look into it," he said.

## Stressing the party's core values

According to Gan, the party's core values had been stated in its constitution and included democratic freedom, fairness and social justice, equality as well as the party's stands on national sovereignty, the federal constitution and Chinese education issues.

He reiterated that it was crucial to re-study the core values as merely doing public community service in the constituencies was not the whole picture of politics.

"If we do not articulate ourselves well enough especially when it comes to national issues, and all the core values of the party as enshrined in the constitutions, we are not going to go very far," he said.

For example, Gan said, national issues like the recent controversial dog trainer video, the MCA should make a clear stand on this despite the fact that it involved Islamic matters.

In the last 20 years, he said, the problems of Chinese top scorers who were not enrolled into local universities remained unsolved and the MCA had been helping them to appeal repeatedly over the years.

"The time has come for us to ensure transparency in governmental operations, and also the accountability part," he said.

## Liow's visit to Taiwan and China questioned

MCA deputy president Liow Tiong Lai, who heads the party's Transformation Task Force, had led trips to study Taiwan's Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) and China's Chinese Communist Party recently in a bid to revive the party.

Gan, who is not a member of the task force, said he had reservations about the study trips' relevance to Malaysian politics.

"We are a democratic country among the capitalist democratic countries, compared to a communist country like China. The landscape and the political structure in Taiwan are very much different from Malaysia," he said.

"I would suggest (the task force) learn more from multi-party countries like Germany and Switzerland for that matter, and other countries where multi-parties which are other than merely the main two parties, and probably the Chinese Communist Party is less relevant," he said.

It was reported that Liow had declared that he will contest for the MCA president's post in the coming party election, becoming the first leader who has openly made known his decision.

Asked whether Liow and he are the valiant leaders who are suitable to lead the party as mentioned earlier, Gan said this should be evaluated by the MCA central delegates.

'Abandon factional mindset'

It is speculated that more factions are forming within MCA as the party elections to choose the new central leadership is around the corner.

NONEGan, who was previously regarded as Ong's supporter, did not answer directly when asked about his alliances in the party currently.

From his point of view, voting for a leader based on political factions is a very traditional mindset and this could further bring about the party's downfall.

He said the central delegates should choose a leader who could stand firm on the party's core values and principles instead of judging him or her from the point of factions.

Rumour has it that Gan was forming an alliance with Labis MP Chua Tee Yong, who is also Soi Lek's son.

To this, Gan did not answer directly, saying that he had heard at least four versions about the factions forming within the party.

As to whether he was waiting for others to include him in any of the alliances to contest for the party elections, Gan stressed that he was focusing on delivering his own ideas on how to revive the party to the grassroots.

"I express my views about what is MCA's role in the Chinese community, and MCA's role in national politics, and MCA's working relationship with the component parties, and to ensure social justice and to ensure our politics fulfil the constitutional objectives and aims," he said.

