

Bukit Bintang unlikely to fall for a dodgy man
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Chan Kok Leong

The fact that the most glamorous seat in the heart of Kuala Lumpur is in the hands of an under-funded opposition party has always been a bitter pill for MCA to swallow. MCPX

Try as hard as they did, the party which claims to represent and speak up for the Chinese community has never been able to win the Bukit Bintang parliamentary seat.

bukit bintang nomination 240208 fong kui lunThe closest MCA came to stealing the seat from DAP was in the last elections when its candidate Tan Chew Mooi was pipped by DAP's Fong Kui Lun by a meagre 304 votes. MDP's Wee Choo Keong (1,107) and independent Lim Peng Soon (132) helped split the votes in the four-way battle in 2004.

But after 11 elections of watching the predominantly Chinese electorate (74.8 percent) pick an "ineffective, non-government" opposition party to represent them in Bukit Bintang, MCA had begun with some confidence 13 days ago on nomination day.

After all, the man they had selected for the job holds the envious record of having served the constituency for 15 years even though he was not the elected MP. Besides being a dedicated social worker, Dr Lee Chong Meng is also a successful businessman.

Dr Ayam's promises

Having moved his service centre around the Bukit Bintang area several times, Lee says he understands the place well and boasts of helping many people of all races.

In his manifesto, the veterinarian (popularly known as 'Dr Ayam') had declared that if he were elected, "Bukit Bintang would become a real world class metropolitan".

Chief among the 59-year-old's promises is a vow to further develop the city and make it a major destination point for tourists and multi national corporations.

lee chong meng bukit bintang mca candidate interview 190208 phoneAnd unlike some of the other MCA campaigners in the Klang Valley, Lee had adopted a very hands-on approach. Not leaving his fate in the hands of the BN machinery (advertisements in all major media channels), he has been trawling the streets speaking at dinner functions and mini ceramah.

"Just one term," he almost begs his listeners every night. "Just one term as a legitimate representative is all I want. After that, maybe I'll retire into the night without any fuss," he crooned to all those who listened.

"After 15 years of service, I deserve this."

In all fairness, this is by no means an unmerited proposal. But who said that politics is fair anyway.

bukit bintang nomination 240208 lee chong mengFor Bukit Bintang folk, sentiment and local feelings tell them that it's equally unwarranted that the ruling government has more than

90 percent of the parliamentary seats when it only garnered 63.9 percent of total votes cast yet.

However, what began as a promising campaign for Lee has slowly turned sour.

Besides an obvious snub from the Selangor and FT Association of Char Yong (a Hakka guild) during its Chinese New Year dinner last Friday, rumours of a chequered past have surfaced for the popular 'Dr Ayam'.

During dinner, the Char Yong president told the crowd that they were supportive of the government but did not look too kindly on its candidate for Bukit Bintang. Lee apologised at the function, calling it a "misunderstanding" but to date, the issue remain unresolved and he stands to lose a few votes from the 6,000 strong guild.

Other matters which have dogged him is the latest revelation that an 18-page document of Bukit Bintang MCA division's meeting which alleged that he had misappropriated funds during a MCA event in 2007.

Besides misappropriation, he has also been accused of wife-beating and is said to have married twice at the same time.

Same tune works for DAP

For Fong Kui Lun, the strongest allegation against him is blandness. Unlike most politicians, he comes across as a simple person who doesn't have a bone of rebellion in him, despite his opposition background.

In contrast to the exuberance displays of 'Dr Ayam', Fong is quiet and unassuming. But that to a certain extent is working for him.

For the rocketman, his song for Bukit Bintang is no different from his predecessors.

bukit bintang nomination 240208 dap banner "Give us the mandate to speak for you in Parliament. Let us apply pressure on City Hall and push for local council elections and leave the clogged drains to DBKL, who we pay a rate to anyway," says Fong.

His tune may be as old as the time when Kuala Lumpur became a city and lost its right to local council elections in 1971 but it's one that the Bukit Bintang people have been singing to for the past 50 years too.

Also symptomatic of some detachment from reality, Bukit Bintang, unlike other constituencies has never worried about development. She knows her place in the city and is sure of herself.

In none of the past 11 elections, has Bukit Bintang picked her suitors based on "development" promises. For the anti-establishment sentiment holds strong here, and it is unlikely she will fall for a man with a dodgy past.