

**MCA drowns in ocean of disgust**  
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analysis MCPX Politics is indeed a brutal business and especially when a political party reaps disastrous results in a general election.

Unsurprisingly, cracks have already appeared in the MCA top rung and voices in the party ranks have become louder, calling for a revamping of the entire leadership echelon through an early party election.

ong ka ting and mcaSeveral MCA sources speculated that the president Ong Ka Ting, should he delay party elections, would raise more suspicions that he intends to serve a personal agenda.

It would also strengthen widening allegations that such manipulation would be secure the position of elder brother Ka Chuan in order to succeed him before his term expires in 2012. In addition, there is a growing collective sentiment that Ka Ting should step down to walk his own talk on the importance of a healthy political culture.

He stands accused of lack of wisdom, poor leadership strategies and turning a blind eye to the 'real' election issues in the Chinese community. Instead, he indulged in 'spinning' out election propaganda during the 13-day campaign.

mca results for parliamentary seat 2008The party contested 40 parliamentary seats and lost 25; and won only 31 of the 90 state seats where it fielded candidates. (See chart)

A grassroots leader in Kuala Lumpur attributed the huge losses to the dropping of capable, experienced and diligent leaders such as Tan Yee Kew, Yap Pian Hon, Tang See Hang and many others, and introduction of 55 percent 'new faces' which was "a fatal strategy".

"The president parachuted inexperienced candidates and (renege) on the moral obligation to allow long-serving leaders to contest. This caused much unhappiness and antagonised local leaders," he said, declining to be named.

Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamed's call for Ka Ting to step down has also resonated with many, especially with Gerakan acting head Dr Koh Tsu Koon immediately offering to resign over the party's loss of Penang to the opposition. (The offer has since been rejected.)

"This is the type of healthy political culture that Malaysian politicians should emulate," a MCA life-member told Malaysiakini.

A veteran who had held an important party post in the 1980s echoed the view.

"The party president must take full responsibility for the electoral defeat, resulting in the party only retaining 37.5 percent of parliamentary and 34.4 percent of state seats," he said.

"The impact will result in fewer posts in the cabinet and government. There are just not enough leaders to fill the current posts, particularly for nine deputy ministers, even if these numbers are maintained in the new cabinet line-up."

An urban voter, TM Lee, 28, remarked: "Ong's claim that the party under his leadership has legitimacy and relevance to the Chinese community is no longer true. It is clear that DAP and PKR candidates who hold more seats in Parliament and the state assemblies are our legitimate representatives.

"Ong has accused DAP's Lim Kit Siang of being power crazy. But by holding on to MCA presidency now, he is viewed as lacking integrity and credibility himself."

### **Catastrophe for MCA**

MCA suffered its heaviest losses since 1969, failing to defend its parliamentary seats in Penang, Kuala Lumpur and Negri Sembilan. In Selangor, Ong Tee Keat (Pandan parliamentary seat) was the lone survivor.

Ka Ting's majority vote in Kulai (Johor) was drastically reduced against the outcome in 2004 at Tanjong Piai (against DAP's Tan Ah Meng), from 23,615 then to 11,744 now.

MCA vice-president Fong Chan Onn (photo) won with a majority of 12,884 against DAP candidate Tan Lay Siang in the Alor Gajah parliamentary seat.

Deputy ministers Tan Chai Ho (home ministry), Donald Lim Siang Chai (tourism) and Fu Ah Kiow (internal security) and parliamentary secretaries Chew Mei Fun (women, family and community development) and Yew Teong Look (federal territories ministry), all lost.

A MCA Penang insider did not mince his words in blaming Ka Ting for the electoral defeat because of 'pork barrel' politics.

"When he promised the party a new era in 2003 following his first 100 days as president, we did not know it would be the start of the Ong dynasty," he said.

"He only won because he deliberately chose a safe seat and pumped in ministerial allocations (of millions of ringgit) into new villages. Still he could not protect the state seat under his parliamentary seat - in Senai (MCA candidate Chun Yoon Fook lost to DAP's Ong Kow Meng). This makes two consecutive losses since 2004."

A party leader further pointed out that the party's central committee had given Ka Ting a full mandate in selecting and placement of candidates.

"As such, he should be held solely accountable and responsible for the disastrous electoral losses. Ka Ting should either step down or direct the party headquarters to conduct party elections in April or May," he said.

(In January, MCA decided to postpone its elections to after the general election, without setting a timeframe.)

A Johor leader noted that some 40 percent of the parliamentary seats in MCA hands have come from this state.

"The president is not entitled to claim credit for this because thousands of party workers were involved in very hard work during campaigning."

## **Planning behind assault**

Ominous signs had appeared even before the elections.

chan kong choychua soi lek 030108Transport Minister-cum-deputy president Chan Kong Choy (left) declined nomination for a parliamentary seat, while Health Minister Chua Soi Lek (right) resigned abruptly due to a sex scandal.

Unexpectedly, deputy minister Hon Choon Kim from Negri Sembilan also announced his early retirement.

Derek da Cunha in his book, 'The Price of Victory - The 1997 Singapore General Election and Beyond', had said that interpreting the general elections is trying to read tea leaves. He said that those with a direct interest in the results, like politicians, will interpret these in ways to suit their own outlook or agenda.

The party's think-tank, Insap, will obviously come up with an analysis, and some of the factors behind the abysmal performance may never be made public.

soh chee wenBut it is reliably learnt that Soh Chee Wen (left), former MCA presidential council and central committee member during Dr Ling Liong Sik's tenure, had planned this electoral assault against MCA as far back as four years ago.

Soh is also a close ally and strategist of PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim.

A PKR source confided: "While MCA talked about the Blue Ocean strategy only sometime last year, Soh had already planned the 'long march' (Mao Tse Tung's tactical art-of-war in the 1930s) five years ago.

"Now you understand why the MCA has drowned in its own ocean."

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