

Ka Ting : my brother is not my successor
Malaysiakini.com
Apr 15, 2008
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In a bid to fend off claims of nepotism, MCA president Ong Ka Ting declared that he will not name his elder brother and party secretary-general Ka Chuan as his successor when he steps down. MCPX

ong ka ting interview 140408 06 "I won't name anyone as successor. I am very sure I won't name Ka Chuan as the successor," the party chief told Malaysiakini in an exclusive 90-minute interview held in his office at the MCA headquarters last Friday.

Ka Ting, 51, said the party members should have the say in deciding who should be their next leader and rejected arguments that he was paving the way for Ka Chuan to take over the party.

"Party election is coming, you can see whether there is any sign that I want to pass my post to him or I want him to succeed... But I am saying it here first that it won't happen," stressed Ka Ting.

He nevertheless defended his elder brother, who is also the Tanjung Malim MP from Perak, as he has proven himself with a sound track record in the party.

The 'Ong dynasty' claim

The claim of nepotism has consistently troubled the two brothers and has become the point of contention in an ongoing campaign, dubbed the 'Save MCA campaign', aimed to remove Ka Ting following the electoral setback faced by the party in the March 8 general election.

The allegation that the brothers were creating an 'Ong dynasty' within the party first started when Ka Ting appointed Ka Chuan as the party's secretary-general in 2005, two years after he took over as president.

ong ka ting ka chuan mca brothers 080408 It reached a high recently after Ka Ting decided not to re-nominate himself as the housing and local government minister in the aftermath of the electoral setback, but the post went to Ka Chuan.

The detractors saw the move as a way of the president - who is due to step down in 2011 when his three-term limit expires - to lay the groundwork for Ka Chuan to take over MCA.

Going by party's hierarchy, Ka Chuan is considered as the No 4 in the party, after the president, deputy president and vice-presidents but the secretary-general's position can yield much clout within the MCA.

Ka Ting also rejected his ally-turned-foe Dr Chua Soi Lek's argument that he was making an inevitable choice to give up the minister's post to Ka Chuan under a win-win formula.

"It is a non-issue if the two ministerial posts were to go to me and my brother. If you have that capability and the party agreed, that can be done," said Ka Ting.

Blessing in disguise

ong ka ting biodata 140408 Meanwhile, the MCA president said he should not be the only person to be blamed for the electoral setback faced by the second largest, Chinese-based, Barisan Nasional component party.

"No single person can cause everything," he stressed, attributing the defeat to many other "external factors" and denied that his 'rejuvenation' electoral strategy was the main reason.

"It's not true that I 'chop' (get rid of) all the old guards and everyone (fielded in the elections) were new and fresh," he stressed.

He described the poor electoral outing as a "blessing in disguise" to a certain extent for the party, making it realise that there was no longer such a thing as traditional 'safe seats'.

Like any other BN component parties, the MCA was hit badly by the political tsunami, seeing its representation fall from 31 to 15 in Parliament and from 76 to 31 at state-level.

Following the results, some had pointed fingers at Ka Ting's decision to drop a number of incumbents in favour of fresh faces.

Among the controversial candidates that the party president had decided to field included academician-turned-politician Dr Hou Kok Chung, Chua's son, Tee Yong and former television personality Victor Gu.

ong ka ting interview 140408 11 While Hou and Tee Yong respectively won the Kluang and Labis parliamentary seats in Johor, Gu lost in the Damansara Utama state seat in Selangor with a huge margin of 15,355-majority votes. Hou had since been appointed the deputy higher education minister.

Asked on whether he foresaw a series of defections to the opposition, the MCA chief said he was confident members who subscribe to the party's cause will not do so.

He also showed a list of the names, saying there were only 38 members who had quit the party after the general election (photo).