

MCA polls - of flash floods and popcorn
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Stanley Koh

A seasoned political observer quipped that MCA leaders are more like government bonds. Not so much that they take a long time to mature (in their ideological thinking) but they also ravish a lengthy period of time to declare their candidacies.

With 38 days left before the national polling battle scheduled for Oct 17-18, there appears to be a sudden rush for top contenders making known their bidding posts.

For the 100-metre dash event, potential candidates are now getting ready for the starting line.

Alas, the "now or never" declaration season has finally arrived and like "parking lots" all the "good spots" are ready to be taken.

mca new cabinet member 180308 ong ka chuan Today's spotlight will be on its secretary-general Ong Ka Chuan (brother to incumbent president Ong Ka Ting) who is also chairperson of the steering committee for internal election who is expected to declare his candidacy after this afternoon's weekly presidential council meeting.

Rhetorically, it is expected that certain candidates in declaring their running positions would sing the familiar tune - "The ground has convinced me to run" or "after having discussions and feedback from my supporters, I have decided to fulfil their aspirations."

It has been speculated that Ka Chuan would be contesting a top position - which some believe will be the deputy presidency post while others conclude that he would be the running mate of Ong Tee Keat despite the latter's previous declaration of not forming any "election partnership."

Three-way battle?

In a couple of days, all eyes will be on Chua Jui Meng who has openly hinted his candidacy for the number one post, probably shaping a three-cornered battle - with a third speculated candidate awaiting his turn to announce.

Nevertheless, it is widely speculated that the third challenger will either be former health minister Chua Soi Lek or vice-president Dr Fong Chan Onn who previously held the human resources ministry portfolio.

And like a snowstorm, one never knows the timing of more candidacy declarations for the four elected vice presidency posts and 20 central committee posts.

The deputy presidency post is also expected to see a crowded line up of contestants, anticipating a keen and lean tussle.

Given the strong competition, the days ahead will likely see discreet "compromises" and "negotiating pacts" between the factional leaders (among aspirants).

The eventual symptoms of MCA going back to electioneering habits like relying on "voting menu" or "bloc voting" trends will be inevitable once election partnerships have crystallised. The coming weeks will be an exciting time for the national delegates as they will be wooed and courted.

Fighting spirit

Some party insiders contend that there is no loss of the "MCA fighting spirit" in the political landscape despite the perception of gloom and pessimism towards the Barisan Nasional currently under frontal attack from Pakatan Rakyat.

"The fighting spirit in the party is very much alive. Look at the elections at the branch and division levels which got good responses," a party veteran from Selangor said.

Judging from recent wide publicity given to the party polls at the lower levels and local news caption screaming, "President's team wins MCA polls (at the recent youth and wanita state elections)," the argument is convincing given the carnival mood.

Whether the MCA polls will end up like commercial taglines which cynics say, "You can't believe a word they (candidates) say," or whether the potentially elected leaders will behave cosmetic mascara, running (away) at the first sign of emotions, will be indeed a political gamble for the national delegates and the Chinese community the party claims to represent.

One thing is certain. Permutations of political alignments and re-alignments among the contestants are expected to take on a more rapid pace once the declarations for the top posts are completed.

Like flash floods, even seasoned party watchers will find it hard to predict when they are coming or how long the floods will last?

But one thing is sure, the MCA polls will be satisfying for the politically inclined and enthusiasts. Like popcorn, they will satisfy you but only for a while. Because once, the elections are over, it is back to facing the harsh realities of the prevailing Malaysian political dilemma.

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