

## **Soi Lek shoots 'loose cannon' Nazri, silent on Chinese support**

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**By Debra Chong**

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 16 — Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek blasted Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz last night for criticising the MCA but sidestepped questions on his party's eroding support from the Chinese community it is supposed to represent.

The MCA president dared the de facto law minister to start legal action against Sin Chew Jit Poh for falsely reporting the latter's offer to the DAP to join the ruling federal coalition Barisan Nasional (BN) two days ago.

If Nazri thinks Sin Chew had printed what he had not said, he should sue Sin Chew," Dr Chua said.

The minister in the Prime Minister's Department was reported by the Chinese daily to have made the offer on Sunday, which led Dr Chua to chide the Umno leader for saying that his MCA had lost Chinese support.

"Nazri is a loose cannon," the former health minister dubbed his ex-Cabinet colleague when asked to elaborate over the Padang Rengas MP's remarks that the MCA had lost its Chinese support.

Dr Chua refused to reply to questions on Nazri's allegation, insisting that was not the main issue.

Nazri denied yesterday he had invited the DAP to join BN to shore up Chinese support for the ruling coalition.

But Nazri told The Malaysian Insider that he had merely responded to a question about falling Chinese support for the ruling coalition.

"No, it is not true. I did not invite DAP," he said, adding that "MCA must work harder" when asked how BN will reclaim Chinese support.

According to Sin Chew, Nazri had said that based on the precedent of Gerakan joining BN after the opposition party had won Penang in the 1969 general election, "we cannot deny the possibility of DAP joining BN. What happens in the future, we cannot predict."

The Padang Rengas MP had said there are no permanent enemies or allies in politics.

"Since independence, Umno is a party that has represented the Malays. During the last elections, Umno still won more than 80 seats in Parliament. PAS only managed 22. PKR's Malay candidates only got nine seats. These two combined only have 31 seats. As such Umno remains the representative of the Malays.

"MCA in the last elections only won 15 seats in Parliament. Gerakan only won two seats and they were in Malay-majority areas. But the DAP's Chinese candidates won more than 20 federal seats. MCA and Gerakan combined are less than DAP. As such, DAP is the most suitable party to represent the interests of the Chinese.

"We also want to understand what has happened. Umno has all this while represented the Malays. This is not the fault of Umno, it is their (MCA and Gerakan) problem," he was quoted by Sin Chew as saying.

Nonetheless, Nazri also said in Sin Chew that no party could depend on just one race to win an election and Umno was no exception.

Gerakan was among a host of parties that joined the three original Alliance members — Umno, the MCA and MIC — to form the BN in 1973.

Nazri also said today that Umno had even opened its doors to PAS in 1971, indicating that the original Alliance parties should not be threatened by more parties joining the coalition.

But the DAP has swiftly shot down the idea of joining BN, telling Nazri to "dream on" as joining the BN would force it into a racial mould which went against its multiethnic beliefs.

The MCA had suffered huge losses in Election 2008, leaving it with only 15 seats out of a total 222 in the Dewan Rakyat and 32 state seats, less than half its tally in the previous polls.

Factionalism then reared its ugly head in the party's October 2008 election, leading to two leadership changes in the last three years.

The MCA's popularity with ethnic Chinese voters has nosedived as the party continues to be wracked with factionalism and scandals including the RM12.5 billion Port Klang Free Zone saga, leading many to question its relevance in the next general election.

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