

MCA leaders say decision to stay out of Cabinet shows 'respect'
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 6 — The MCA leadership has remained firm on its stand to stay out of the Cabinet should the party fare worse than it did in Election 2008, insisting today that this was out of respect for the Chinese community and not to "punish" them.

MCA vice-president Datuk Chor Chee Heung told The Malaysian Insider that the decision, reached recently by the party's central committee, showed the humility of the MCA's leaders and their willingness to accept defeat with grace.

"The idea is not so much to penalise the Chinese voters... it is more to inform the Malaysian public and even MCA members that if the Chinese community does not want MCA to represent them in Cabinet, then we should not be in at all," he said when contacted today.

Chor (picture) was responding to a statement by senior Umno minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Aziz carried in The Malaysian Insider today that it would be unfair to "punish" the Chinese if they chose not to vote for Barisan Nasional's (BN) Chinese-centric parties like the MCA or Gerakan.

The influential Umno leader told The Malaysian Insider that even if the MCA failed to secure a single parliamentary seat in the coming polls, it should still be given posts in the BN government to ensure that all races are well represented.

Nazri was recalling a pledge made by MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek several months ago when the former Cabinet minister said he would pull his party from the government if it performs worse than it did in Election 2008.

Dr Chua first mooted the idea when he urged the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) not to join the Sarawak Cabinet after it won only six of the 19 seats it contested in the April 16 state polls.

He later said the MCA would do the same, using the 2008 results as its benchmark. Should MCA fail to win at least 15 parliamentary and 31 state seats, pledged Dr Chua, the party will not accept any Cabinet posts in the next government.

Chor, who himself is a minister in the Najib administration's Cabinet, said it was not the MCA's intention to yank Chinese representation from the government as the party was not the right authority to make such a decision.

He pointed out that the prime minister could always install Chinese leaders from other BN parties in the MCA's place.

"We are showing respect to the wishes of the voters. Whether Cabinet should have Chinese representatives or not, it is not for us to say.

"If they want to put others in place of MCA, then so be it... we cannot do anything, right?" he said.

MCA Youth chief Datuk Wee Ka Siong appeared to agree with his colleague and stressed that the MCA's pledge to reject government posts was accepted by all grassroots leaders and the party's central leadership.

He said it was important for the MCA's leaders to first obtain support from voters before they dwell on which and how many ministerships they should be accorded.

"If we cannot win, how could we gain a seat in government? There is a reason why MCA chose to do this and this is a party decision. The resolution by our central committee was subsequently accepted during the annual general meeting of the branches, divisions and state conventions," he said.

Wee, a deputy minister, added that it was more important now for the party to concentrate on working hard to win at the polls.

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