

Is MCA In Better Position To Face General Election
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By Alan Ting

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 25 (Bernama) -- The MCA annual general meeting on Oct 2 will be its 58th and last before it heads for the 13th general election.

No doubt, the second largest party in Barisan Nasional is now more stable and its leadership more focussed on rebuilding the MCA after its worse ever electoral performance in 2008.

But is it in a better position to face the coming election?

Grassroots and mid-ranking leaders such as Selangor MCA Public Complaints Bureau chairman Datuk Theng Book believe so.

Theng credits MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek with making the party "more stable and more accommodating."

"With the party facing internal and external treats, Dr Chua is the best person to have at the helm," he said.

"We are not saying (Tan Sri) Ong Ka Ting was not okay (as president from 2006 until October 2008). But that was before the turbulence," Theng said.

"The immediate past president (Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat) is acting more like the opposition," he added.

Theng said that people claiming that the MCA would be wiped out in the next general election were either supporters or members of the DAP which has an uneasy relationship with PAS, especially over the Hudud law issue.

Political analyst Dr Chin Yew Sing, who heads a Chinese think tank, also believes that the MCA is better prepared for the next general election.

He said the MCA has become more vocal in bringing up issues of interest to the community.

"Whether they can be solved or not is another matter. People know that issues can't be resolved overnight," Chin said.

He said the MCA and the BN are now seen to be working together to address issues such as corruption, human rights and funding for Chinese schools.

Co-founder of the Centre for Strategic Engagement Rita Sim said the MCA appeared to be more stable under "war time president" Dr Chua who has come up with several good initiatives such as the 1MCA medical fund and 1MCA scholarships.

"He works very hard on the ground. The party has wasted a lot of time due to the internal fighting," she said, adding that the performance of the MCA performance would also depend on issues the voters face as the election approaches and how these affect their mood.

However, political analyst at Monash University Dr James Chin does not believe that the MCA is better positioned for the polls.

According to him, the MCA has a lot of internal problems "despite the united front it projects."

"A big problem is how to select candidates for the general election because the split is still there and will re-surface when members are jockeying and lobbying for seats," he said.

Chin spoke of how tough it would be for the MCA to win urban seats, but Rita Sim pointed out that those constituencies had always been difficult for the party.

"Even during the best years, the level of support for the MCA in these areas was only between 35 and 38 per cent," she said.

"In the 2004 general election, the support even went below 30 per cent. Now it is only about 20 to 25 per cent.

"If they (the MCA) can get back between four and five per cent, the result will certainly be better as many seats had been lost with a majority of less than 2,000 votes," SIM said.

The focus is not just on Chinese voters, but also on Malay and Indian voters as a slight increase in support from these two communities could go a long way towards improving the MCA performance, Sim added.

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