

BN leaders tell Soi Lek, Tee Keat to end squabble
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 3 — Barisan Nasional (BN) component party members have called for an end to the squabble between the MCA's Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek and his predecessor Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat, reminding both leaders of the uphill task ahead to regain the party's flailing Chinese support.

When met at Parliament here, Umno, MCA and MIC leaders agreed that both Dr Chua and Ong should bury the hatchet and "agree to disagree" instead of dwelling on "petty" issues.

Wee said Dr Chua had closed the chapter.

MCA Youth chief Dr Wee Ka Siong, however, told The Malaysian Insider that Dr Chua had closed the chapter during the party's annual general meeting last night after the latter responded to Ong's remarks.

He urged all party members to refrain from dragging the matter further, voicing concern over the need to focus on ensuring the MCA's survival which, he said, was at stake.

"I think from now on, no one will talk (about the issue). Except maybe the media.

"I think we should put a stop. I want party members, whether the past president, to talk about unity to ensure the survival of the party... that is at stake," he said.

The 18-month-old feud between Dr Chua and Ong, who has grown increasingly isolated from the party since he lost his presidential bid last year, was reignited recently following rumours the latter could be dropped as the Pandan MP in the coming polls.

Ong however struck back and even said Dr Chua would not qualify to contest under BN's current policy of only fielding "winnable" candidates due to the latter's 2007 sex scandal.

In response, a visibly upset Dr Chua declared himself a winnable candidate yesterday and urged Ong to quit the party after the latter's "disparaging remarks" against the MCA's top echelon.

"You have no faith in MCA, why do you want to stand as a candidate under the BN, MCA banner? Resign if you have no faith in this party," Dr Chua had said.

Despite the duo's open dispute, Umno supreme council member Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Aziz told The Malaysian Insider that the quarrel was not likely serious.

"There must be space for differences of opinions. I think Malaysians are matured enough to know this is a democracy. So I do not think this will affect MCA," he said.

He however urged MCA leaders to be "matured enough" when facing questions from the media, saying they should know better than to respond with disparaging remarks about one another.

Bung Mokhtar urged the two feuding leaders to 'forget the past'. Another Umno supreme council member, Datuk Bung Mokhtar Radin, urged both MCA leaders to "forget the past" and focus on regaining Chinese support for BN.

"MCA is one of the biggest parties representing the Chinese community so they need to make the Chinese trust in their leadership.

"Any split or conflict and the Chinese community will not support them. Follow the advice of the prime minister," he said.

The Kinabatangan MP also appeared to disagree with Dr Chua's proclamation that he considers himself a "winnable" candidate, saying the MCA president had "no right" to make such a declaration.

"It is for the people to decide and for the PM. Dr Chua has no right to claim he is winnable," he said.

MIC vice-president S.K. Devamany agreed with his BN comrades, saying it was his party's wish that Ong and Dr Chua laid to rest their grievances.

"BN's victory is now paramount. We are in the midst of rolling out our ETP (Economic Transformation Programme) and GTP (Government Transformation Programme) and now our Political Transformation Programme.

"As party of the BN family, MCA must settle its differences," he said.

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