

**Vernacular school issue will cost MCA, say Chinese associations**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
**April 13, 2012**  
**By Yow Hong Chieh**

KUALA LUMPUR, April 13 — MCA risks a worse showing at the coming polls than in 2008 for its poor handling of the vernacular school issue, warned one of Malaysia's largest groupings of Chinese associations.

The Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall (KLSCAH) said the party would likely secure even fewer votes in the coming election for failing to ensure Chinese vernacular primary schools were treated fairly by Putrajaya.

Yesterday, Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin accused Chinese educationists today of telling "big lies" for claiming the government had sidelined Chinese vernacular schools for decades.

KLSCAH secretary-general Stanley Yong said he had "a strong feeling" that MCA would be rejected by voters, judging from the hostile reception given to MCA Youth chief Datuk Dr Wee Ka Siong at a rally two weeks ago.

Wee, who is deputy education minister, was chased out of the rally after being taunted and jeered by the angry crowd, but not before he was allegedly assaulted by a disgruntled protester.

The rally was organised by the United Chinese School Committees Association (Dong Zong) to protest the shortage of qualified Chinese school teachers in the national education system.

"They were saying that MCA, to them, was totally irrelevant... I think the rejection of the MCA in the government is actually on the increasing side," Yong told The Malaysian Insider.

MCA suffered its worst outing at the polls in 2008, which saw its representation in Parliament slashed by half — to 15 seats from 31. The Barisan Nasional (BN) founding party performed no better at state level, only managing to clinch 31 seats.

Yong pointed out that despite having many ministers in Cabinet since independence, MCA has been unable to shift Putrajaya's policies on Chinese primary schools even after the Chinese community had raised issue repeatedly.

This would "naturally" lead the Chinese to blame the party, especially the MCA politician holding the deputy education minister portfolio traditionally given to the party, he said.

"Since he is Chinese, and since the Chinese community is suffering, and since the Chinese deputy minister of education understands this and yet has done nothing about it, obviously the anger will be poured on him," he added.

Yong warned that there was little time left for MCA to change tack with polls looming but said the party could still salvage some support from the community by proposing long-term

plans to resolve the problems faced by Chinese schools.

MCA must do this even if it meant using the party's own resources and not those of the federal government if the party wants "to bring down the anger and the feeling of dissatisfaction" felt by Chinese voters, he said.

But he stressed that this was just a stop-gap measure, and that Putrajaya would eventually have to treat Chinese primary schools "exactly like" national ones if the BN government were to resolve this long-standing issue.

"They have to view the complaints as an ultimate demand and they should not brush off the complaints as something raised by the opposition...

"This is not only unprofessional, it is also a very childish move," the KLSCAH secretary-general added.

KLSCAH is the largest umbrella group of Chinese associations in Selangor. Formed 85 years ago, it boasts in excess of 420 members ranging from business councils to athletic societies.

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