

**MCA touts 'Ah Jib Gor' factor for Chinese vote**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 22 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak's popularity or the "Ah Jib Gor" factor will help cajole a segment of the Chinese community back to Barisan Nasional (BN) in the coming polls, MCA grassroots leaders have agreed, but warned that the same sentiment could not topple the opposition in its urban fortresses.

This was the resounding sentiment among delegates attending the MCA's 59th annual general meeting at Wisma MCA yesterday, which is seen as the party's final chance to chart its election strategies in the months ahead as it heads into its toughest battle yet.

"Najib is good because he has done a lot of programmes for the people, I am sure the Chinese will vote BN," said one delegate, Lim Chee Cheong, from Rasah in Negri Sembilan.

"Najib has done a lot for the Chinese. And he has our support and the Chinese community support as well," another delegate, Loke Poh Chye from Pengkalan Kota in Penang, told The Malaysian Insider.

During the meeting earlier, among one of the key battle cries sounded by the party leadership was a call for delegates to "Stand with Najib", who was extensively described as a leader popular among the Chinese.

In his presidential address, party president Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek repeatedly praised Najib's transformative policies and attention to Chinese community issues, even telling the prime minister, "Sir, sometimes I think that you are too kind."

At the MCA Youth AGM on Saturday, party deputy president Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai predicted that the MCA will "rise again" in the coming polls, citing Najib's popularity among the Chinese community as one of the key reasons behind the possibility.

He said the prime minister's outreach towards the Chinese community, even resorting to social media tools like Facebook to create a Chinese persona, "Ah Jib Gor" (Brother Najib), had successfully convinced voters that the community would not be left out of the nation's development.

"The feel-good factor is coming back. And the commitment from the PM to the Chinese... the Ah Jib Gor factor shows that he will listen to the Chinese community," Liow had said.

But despite these leaders' optimism, several MCA delegates approached by The Malaysian Insider yesterday agreed that the party would suffer the most when attempting to sway the urban Chinese vote, pointing out that in areas like Petaling Jaya Selatan or key states like Penang, it would be near impossible for the MCA to trounce the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) federal opposition pact.

"I don't think so we can win back PJ, they are entrenched already with the opposition. I don't think we can take Penang back either," said Loh KF, a delegate from the area.

Loh was among several delegates who also admitted that the issue of corruption would be among BN's greatest stumbling block to woo the Chinese vote, complaining that it was hard to answer voters who brought up issues like the National Feedlot Centre (NFC) scandal and other graft cases.

"Bribery is really bad, I was a victim myself," said Sungai Siput MCA delegate Tham Siew Poh.

Tham was also critical of the MCA's focus on hudud law, a wedge issue used against the DAP and PAS who are members of the PR opposition pact.

"Most Chinese already understand that the hudud issue is hands-off, it's a religious question, very sensitive. This issue shouldn't be commented upon.

"After all, hudud has already been implemented in many countries, why be scared if we do no wrong?" Tham said.

But his opinion was not shared by Tenggara MCA delegate Catherine Chia, from Johor.

Chia said the hudud issue was critical to be highlighted on as it affects Chinese culture and was demeaning towards women.

"I think this hudud will affect everybody, not only Chinese, the whole nation. If the nation is under hudud law, we will become just like the Middle East nations. And eight of the most corrupt nations come from that region," Loke said.

Loke also said the MCA needed to find greater courage and be more assertive in the PR-led Penang, a point which Kulim delegate Tan Kok Leong agreed with.

"MCA must be brave to speak up so that we are seen as the same as being on the same level as Umno. MCA and Umno are in the same BN family, but we must speak up for our rights," Tan said.

However, Rasah MCA's Lim disagreed, saying that there was already equal treatment between Umno and other BN counterparts.

"We are all like a family. MCA and Umno have worked together for a long time. So we must work together to ensure a victory. No one is more important, all are the same," Lim said.

Post-Election 2008, the MCA was often criticised for its alleged lack of clout as a "junior" party in BN, even described as "subservient" to its coalition partner Umno.

During the polls, the MCA had suffered its worst ever electoral defeat when it saw its parliamentary representation cut by more than half from 31 to just 15 seats.

The MCA was further torn apart by a fractious power struggle and a faction war after the polls, leading to the extraordinary general meeting in 2010 which saw Dr Chua trounce former party president Tan Sri Ong Ka Ting and predecessor Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat for the presidency.

But according to Dr Chua yesterday, the new MCA leadership under his watch has achieved much, owing to the party's more unified stance and greater focus on the polls ahead.

"We have our weaknesses and through these weaknesses, the new MCA leadership learned and emerged stronger in facing obstacles and challenges," he said.

"We have reinvented ourselves," he said. "We speak up so that the government can hear them loud and clear and we are committed to speak up for all Malaysians."

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