

Soi Lek confirms not contesting in GE13
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BY CLARA CHOOI

KUALA LUMPUR, April 11 — Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek confirmed today that he will not be contesting the May 5 polls, saying the decision was to “prove” he is committed to serving the party and is not clamouring for power.

The MCA president said in a statement that it would be very “self-serving” if he were to offer himself as a candidate after pushing all members to put party interest above personal gain.

Calling Election 2013 the “mother of all elections”, Dr Chua said nearly half MCA’s candidates for both state and parliament seats will be new faces.

“I want to prove a point that I am fighting for a cause, that MCA remains relevant, and continue to lead the party without standing for elected public office,” he said.

Dr Chua, a veteran politician and former minister, said his decision to stay out of the polls contest would make him MCA’s first full-time party president.

“I wish to continue that role in the general election, where I can campaign full time for Barisan Nasional (BN) candidates, particularly for MCA,” he said.

The outspoken party president was recently asked to fight DAP veteran Lim Kit Siang in Gelang Patah but sources said he declined the contest, which is expected to be the hottest battle in Umno’s home state of Johor.

The Malaysian Insider also understands MCA is pushing for caretaker Johor Mentri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman to fight the DAP adviser but an unsettled Malay ground and pro-opposition Chinese voters could scuttle those plans.

Dr Chua reminded today that he became party president at a time when MCA was suffering a protracted internal crisis that went on for a good two years since 2008.

He said his purpose at the time had been solely to reinvent and reinvigorate the party with the aim of grooming new leaders to take charge.

“After devoting full time in turning the party around, it is now more focused, united and members are fuelled with better optimism and fighting spirit to face the general election,” he said.

Dr Chua added that he has also been working “tirelessly” by embarking on projects and programmes to ensure MCA remains relevant.

“Today, I am walking the talk in allowing new and young leaders in the rejuvenation process so that the party will continue to remain relevant,” he said.

Dr Chua, dubbed a “comeback king” when he won the party’s presidential elections in 2010, had inherited a fractured MCA torn apart by two years of internal bickering and faction-fighting, fuelled by its electoral losses in 2008.

During the tumultuous 12th general election, MCA saw its parliamentary representation cut by nearly half from 31 to just 15 seats.

After he took on MCA's presidency, Dr Chua announced that the party's presidential council had agreed to reject any offer of government posts if it performs worst than it did in 2008.

Speaking at a press conference here later, Dr Chua defended his decision not to contest the polls, adding that he had voiced this to BN chairman Datuk Seri Najib Razak last year.

He repeated that this mirrored his commitment to the renewal process and took a swipe at the opposition for propagating change when a large crop of its leaders are veterans in the political scene.

"In this context, Nik Aziz is already 82 years old, Lim Kit Siang is 72, and they say they are giving a chance to the young and that the country should change but they never change," he said, referring to PAS spiritual leader Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat and DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang.

Malaysia will decide its next government this May 5 in an electoral contest that is expected to be the most heated to date.

Some 13.3 million voters, including 5,200 abroad, are eligible to cast their ballots in Election 2013 to elect lawmakers in 222 federal and 505 state seats in 12 states. Sarawak already held its state elections in 2011.

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