

In Pandan, Najib's look-alike part of MCA's charm offensive
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PANDAN, April 25 – They thought it was the prime minister and at first glance, the man in the blue BN shirt did bear a striking resemblance to Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

But the younger man – also shorter and with jet-black hair – was not the prime minister but his son Mohd Nazifuddin.

He was helping to give the MCA candidate for Pandan, Gary Lim, a boost by charming voters with his friendly manner.

Ironically, MCA is now the underdog despite being undefeated ever since Pandan became a proper Federal constituency after a re-delineation three terms ago.

It was apparent that the senior BN component party was hoping to capitalise on Najib's popularity – albeit through his son – to reverse the downward trend in Chinese support.

"From their response I can see they are sincere, full of joy and this feeling is not only in Teratai, but also in the whole of Malaysia.

"The confidence towards BN is increasing," Nazifuddin told reporters at a restaurant after his walkabout in the Chinese commercial area here.

Teratai is one of the three state seats located within Pandan where the MCA will face a four-cornered fight against the DAP and two other independents. One of the independents is incumbent Jenice Lee who was sacked from the DAP for contesting.

The crowded race at state level gives a minor glimpse into the volatility of the Pandan seat race.

At Federal level, the division is said to be worse. MCA's rivalry-driven decision to drop popular incumbent Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat and replace him with lawyer Gary Lim could threaten to sabotage the party's chances to retain the seat.

And amid the disappearing support from the Chinese, Pandan's second biggest electorate, the MCA is facing a Pakatan Rakyat heavyweight in the form of Rafizi Ramli. His exceptional reputation as the opposition's "expose man", and his expose on Lim's alleged misconduct, has already given him considerable edge over his opponent.

A party worker said MCA's predicament has sent the party scrambling for ideas on how to overturn their dimming luck and it looks like Nazifuddin could help resuscitate the party's chances of winning.

"Yes, that's true we are the underdog. But we know Najib is popular even among the Chinese. So maybe Najib's son could help us get some support lah," said the worker on condition of anonymity.

And on the surface, Nazifuddin's visit to the restaurants, stalls and shops in this Chinese majority area could be considered a success. One can sense that he aims to emulate his

father's approach when talking to locals – making himself equal with the voters instead of projecting a superior attitude that often typifies BN leaders.

He even visited the local DAP office and shook hands with everyone there and wished them good luck. Most of the opposition's party workers looked impressed and so did other onlookers.

But the local Chinese said although Nazifuddin's appearance, and again his resemblance to the father, may have been a "pleasant" surprise, voting for Najib senior may not necessarily be in the pipeline.

"Wahh when I first saw him I wasn't sure I thought he looked a lot like the PM especially that he had many BN people and cameraman following him," said 47-year-old Poh, a Teratai voter.

When asked if she felt that Najib was a good leader and that having his son personally asking of their well-being would mean she would vote for BN, Poh replied: "He's a nice guy lah," referring to Nazifuddin.

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