

MCA the biggest loser in Najib's new Cabinet
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KUALA LUMPUR, May 15 – MCA is the biggest loser after Datuk Seri Najib Razak dished the ministerial portfolios – traditionally reserved for the ruling Chinese party – today to its allies in the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition while naming his new Cabinet for 2013.

The Health Ministry had been long-helmed by MCA lawmakers but the portfolio slipped out of the party's hands and into MIC president Datuk Seri G. Palanivel's lap.

Likewise the Transport Ministry, another portfolio usually reserved for the BN Chinese component party, was given to Umno's Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, who was also appointed the new defence minister.

MCA deputy president Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai (picture) had been the previous health minister, while party secretary-general Datuk Seri Kong Cho Ha had been the transport minister last term.

Liow had succeeded in defending his Bentong federal seat although with a far thinner margin, drawing just 800-over votes more than his opponent. Kong was defeated in the Lumut parliamentary contest at the May 5 general election.

MCA had won only seven federal seats and 11 state seats out of the 37 parliamentary seats and 90 state seats it contested – less than half the federal seats it took in 2008.

Party president Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek had said that the party will not accept any government post in light of the party's poor showing in the recently-concluded elections.

And although Najib said the transport ministry is still there for MCA's taking pending a decision by the party's leadership, Chinese representation in the government is seen to have drastically shrunk to one, with the surprise inclusion of Datuk Paul Low Seng Kwan.

Low, who is president of the Malaysian chapter of international corruption watchdog, Transparency International, was picked to be senator and made a minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

Najib and other BN leaders, including former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, had recently called on the MCA to reconsider its decision to refuse all government posts, saying an absence of Chinese leaders at the government's top decision-making level could heighten racial tensions.

But former MCA president and transport minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat had said that "effective" representation of the people is more important than having Chinese faces in the government.

Ong had said the need for such representation reflected an "old" way of thinking, and added that those wielding power should work to serve all Malaysians instead.

The 13-party BN coalition, which succeeded the Umno-MCA-MIC union founded before the country's Independence in 1957, had kept to the age-old power-sharing formula to form

government by appointing ministers representatives from each of the three main race-based parties.

Several Chinese associations have said they are not worried about the possibility of a Cabinet without a single Chinese face because in the country's new political landscape, any minister regardless of race must represent all Malaysians.

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