

**MCA set to return to government after members give leaders nod to take up posts**  
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**OLEH EILEEN NG**

After a nine-month absence, MCA is set to rejoin the Najib administration after members overwhelmingly gave their consent for their leaders to take up government posts.

Despite protests in the run-up to its extraordinary general meeting (EGM) today, 1,973 out of 1,982 central delegates, or 99.5%, voted via show of hands, for their leaders to accept posts at the federal, state and local levels.

Only five voted against it while four abstained.

The senior BN party had decided against taking up any government posts since it fared badly in the 13th general election, ending up with only seven of the 37 federal seats and 11 of 90 state seats it contested.

Despite the endorsement from the members, newly elected president Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai said the party's leaders were not in a hurry to return to the cabinet.

"We have the Kajang by-election coming up and there are a lot of issues involving the Chinese community and the public that needed to be resolved.

"So, we will cross the bridge when the time comes," he told a news conference after the EGM today.

Liow, the Bentong MP, together with his deputy Datuk Wee Ka Siong, is almost certain to be appointed to the cabinet.

Speculation is rife that the Chinese party would get up to three ministerial posts and a maximum of four deputy minister posts in the event of a cabinet reshuffle.

Currently, the transport minister's post is temporarily held by Umno's Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein.

The party had four ministerial and seven deputy minister posts previously.

Liow said the positive results also showed that the majority of delegates gave their support to the resolution to ensure MCA can continue serving the people.

"We will be vocal and give our commitment to all," he pledged.

Today's EGM is not without controversy.

Since Thursday, some 10 grassroots members bearing placards had staged a sit-in in front of the party headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, to stress that the timing was not right for the leaders to accept cabinet posts.

Former president Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek and former vice-president Gan Ping Sieu had also expressed their reservations over the timing of the EGM, which might hamper MCA's preparations for the March 23 Kajang by-election, as well as the way the resolution was drafted.

Today's EGM comes four months after an EGM on October 20 which saw members voting for party leaders to rejoin the government at state and local council levels, but decided against its leaders taking up cabinet posts.

Before voting commences today, lawyer and Negri Sembilan English-speaking bureau deputy chairman Tan Foong Luen protested against the EGM, claiming that the notices sent out to the delegates were defective. However, his argument was shot down by speaker Datuk Yik Phooi Hong.

Some 400 delegates, led by vice-president Datuk Chua Tee Yong, had also wanted voting to be conducted via secret ballot but this was rejected by rest of the floor when it was put to a vote.

This led Gan to claim that the 400 delegates walked out without exercising their rights to vote but this allegation was denied by the top leadership.

"It's not true, there are no walkouts by members. I will not speculate on hearsay, the meeting was conducted efficiently," Liow said, while Wee chipped in to say that some might have wanted to go to the toilet or for smoking breaks.

Secretary-general Datuk Ong Ka Chuan said the party had twice reaffirmed its previous decision not to take up government posts via show of hands in its past EGMs and as such, this EGM was in line with the procedures

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