

## **Former MCA chief hits out at party for staying out of Bukit Gelugor race**

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**BY EILEEN NG**

Former MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek has hit out at the party's decision to stay out of the by-election in Bukit Gelugor, saying it would further affect its credibility and raise questions about its leadership capabilities.

"The reasons they gave for not standing do not lend credibility to MCA leadership. This is a good opportunity to evaluate whether members are finally united with high morale and whether the Chinese have returned to BN as claimed by the party's leaders.

"Don't you think this is a good battleground to test what you had claimed in the last six months?" Dr Chua told The Malaysian Insider in an interview today.

He was referring to the remarks by his successor Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai and vice-president Datin Paduka Chew Mei Fun, that Chinese voters had started to return to the Barisan Nasional based on the results of the March 23 Kajang by-election.

Chew, who stood as the BN candidate in Kajang against PKR president Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, had said that the MCA improved its performance among the Chinese electorate in Kajang, from 18% in the 13th general election to 25%.

Dr Chua, who has a tumultuous relationship with Liow, said the no-contest decision reinforced his belief that his successor was not a fighter and

instead, preferred to avoid major issues.

"Why are you withdrawing at this critical moment that will give you an acid test whether your transformation programme and leadership had been accepted? You wanted to avoid this because you are not a fighter," he said.

Since Liow assumed the MCA presidency, the party has been undergoing a "transformation" programme to revive and regain support from Chinese voters, following dismal performance in 2008 and 2013.

MCA had said it wanted to focus on reviving the party as well as on its fight against efforts to introduce Islamic criminal law, or hudud, in Kelantan.

However, it was forced to change its pitch after PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang announced Sunday that PAS would not go ahead with plans to introduce two private members bill in Parliament to facilitate hudud in Kelantan.

Instead, Hadi said the Kelantan would work with Putrajaya to iron out details through a joint technical committee set up by both.

In the general election last year, MCA won only seven of the 37 federal seats and 11 of 90 state seats it contested, leading to its decision not to accept government or cabinet posts. The decision was however overturned via an extraordinary general meeting earlier this year.

Dr Chua said by refraining from contesting the Bukit Gelugor by-election, which will see the son of its late incumbent Karpal Singh as the DAP candidate, Liow missed the opportunity to show critics that he had transformed MCA and regain support for the party.

"They are also denying people the choice to vote for BN," he added.

Dr Chua further said that both Liow and Chew previously accused him that his tainted past was one reason why the Chinese would not support MCA.

Dr Chua, a former health minister, was forced to quit all his government and party posts in January 2008 following revelation of a sex scandal.

Although he managed to make a political comeback, he did not defend his presidency at the party polls last December.

"These two are 'perfect leaders'. So why are they worried about contesting in Bukit Gelugor? The Chinese are salivating to support MCA now, they will come back in busloads to vote for MCA," said Dr Chua.

He said the by-election would serve as an excellent platform for the party to take on the DAP on its stand on hudud. – May 14, 2014.

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