BM a must for GE16 hopefuls

Dr Wee: The right candidate must also be serving the community ahead of polls

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KUALA LUMPUR: MCA has begun early preparations for the 16th General Election, says party president Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong.

Any request to contest in a constituency should not be a case of securing the seat first and only then discussing the candidates, he said.

"The right candidate must already be serving the community so that once elections are called, we are prepared," he said.

GE16 is expected to take place in 2027.

Dr Wee said that MCA was conducting a stringent selection process, which included assessments of Bahasa Malaysia proficiency.

He expressed satisfaction with the proactive attitude of younger party leaders, noting their effective use of social media to voice public concerns.

Speaking at the Selangor MCA convention yesterday, Dr Wee said it was time for MCA to actively push for representation in the state assembly to ensure that the people's voices are heard.

Asked whether MCA would contest under a coalition framework, Dr Wee said the priority for now was early preparation and that any other announcement should be made at the appropriate time.

"As a political party, who wouldn't want to contest? If we don't, then what are we here for? We have our position and our strategy, and we will do what needs to be done," he said.

Pressed on whether MCA was inclined to contest independently before forming alliances after the polls, Dr Wee said the party had options, but no decision had been made.

"For now, the most important thing is to be prepared," he said.

On a separate matter, Dr Wee urged public universities to focus on their core responsibilities of social mobility and nurturing talent, rather than prioritising profit.

He stressed that Malaysians must be given priority in admissions as the number of international students in public universities continues to rise.

Citing figures from the Higher Education Ministry, Dr Wee said that in 2024, public universities recorded an enrolment of 30,714 students from China, 4,145 (Indonesia), 2,098 (Iraq), 1,969 (Bangladesh) and 1,638 (Nigeria).

As for Universiti Malaya, it hosted 10,226 foreign students, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (8,748), Universiti Sains Malaysia (8,695), Universiti Putra Malaysia (6,056) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (4,663).

However, Dr Wee acknowledged the financial challenges faced by universities.

"One vice-chancellor told me that universities only receive 61% of their requested allocation from the government. They have to find the remaining 39% themselves," he said.

"Recruiting foreign students who can afford higher tuition fees becomes their survival strategy."

He pointed out that Universiti Malaya introduced an "open channel" in 2018 to strengthen financial sustainability.

Students admitted through this channel are given priority access but they must pay full tuition fees.

In some cases, this would be equivalent to private universities.

"This makes education even less accessible for the lower-income group," he said.

As such, MCA has called for a Royal Commission of Inquiry to review and reform admission channels in public universities.

Selangor MCA chairman Datuk Lawrence Low said the state has set up a war room to prepare strategies for the next general election.

He said the focus would be on defending the rights of the public and serving with sincerity.

Members, he said, must engage directly with communities to better understand their needs and grievances.

"We adopt the principle of 'going out, staying grounded' by reaching out to temples, NGOs, hawker groups and residents' associations," he added.

Low said Selangor MCA was at a turning point, witnessing political upheavals and repeated policy injustices.

Legacy recognised: Dr Wee (sixth from left), flanked by Dr Mah (left) and Low, alongside party veterans and delegates during the Selangor MCA convention at Wisma MCA in Kuala Lumpur. — YAP CHEE HONG/The Star

The people, he said, had been burdened with a range of issues such as the Sales and Service Tax expansion, subsidy cuts and higher utility rates for businesses.

And the grievances from the public were growing, he added.

"Many people, particularly the Chinese community, are dissatisfied with government policies. They have been asking who can solve their problems, speak up and stand up for them.

"But let me remind you, just because the people are angry at the other side, it does not mean their votes will automatically come to MCA.

"We must strengthen ourselves and become the third and better choice for the people. Win trust with sincerity, win votes with strength," he said.

Low also expressed confidence that Selangor MCA could achieve its target of recruiting 3,000 new members before GE16, adding that hundreds of new members had already signed up.

Veteran leaders, including former MCA president Tan Sri Liow Tiong Lai, Datuk Yap Pian Hon and Datuk Tang See Hang, attended the convention.

Also present were MCA deputy president Datuk Dr Mah Hang Soon, vice-presidents Datuk Seri Dr Wee Jeck Seng, Datuk Lim Ban Hong and Datuk Tan Teik Cheng, as well as secretary-general Datuk Chong Sin Woon and Wanita chief Datuk Wong You Fong.

The convention also paid tribute to past leaders and veterans.

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