

Heed PM's advice, MCA leaders urge Ong

STAR 30 MAR 2002

KUALA LUMPUR: MCA leaders have urged Youth chief Datuk One Tee Keat to heed Datuk S&i Dr Mahathir Mohamad's advice not to take party matters to the Government and courts to decide, saving party matters were strictly internal.

Vice-president Datuk Dr Fang Chan Onn said the advice of the Prime Minister were the words of an experienced leader.

"These are wise words and as a mature leader. I hope his advice will put an end to all the unsubstantiated allegations which have caused much confusion," he said.

Dr Fong said the courts and Government should not be

abused by politicians.

MCA central committee member Datuk Dr Chua Soi Lek said Ong's claims of 261 new branches not being allowed to take part in the elections showed he was finding ways to vindicate himself over his suspension as Youth chief.

He questioned why Ong was raising the issue when it was the practice all along for new branches to operate once they received the approval of the party headquarters.

"It is a question of procedure and is an accepted practice. Why raise a big fuss now over what has been practised all along.

"I think Ong is running out

of issues and this is his best opportunity to vindicate himself. (But) if he is doing this to show' he 'has grassroots support then he should wait a few more months (at the party elections).

"What Dr Mahathir said is true and Ong should seriously consider the comments and not continue to tarnish the party's image through the press," he said.

Dr Mahathir had said that political party matters should be left to the party to decide and not the Government or the courts.

He said parties were not subjected to decisions made by the Government and courts and the Societies Act was

amended in 1990 based on Umno being deregistered by the High Court due to the existence of a few illegal branches.

Ong claimed that the Registrar of Societies (ROS) had directed the 261 new branches which were approved after Dec 31 not to take part in the party's elections.

However, the MCA headquarters clarified that Ong had made the claim based on a letter from the ROS.

It said all the new branches had been properly constituted and approved by the MCA central committee before Dec 31 in accordance with the constitution and the decision of the

party was final and conclusive.

Central committee member Datuk Hon Choon Kim expressed similar sentiments, saying Ong had reportedly denied in the Chinese newspapers that he questioned the legality of the 261 branches.

"He is now trying to run away from the issue which he created. Now, he is saying that he only talked about the formation of the branches and not their legality.

"He is always shifting goalposts to suit his political agenda. I think the grassroots leaders are aware that he merely wants to stop the polls," he added.