

Angry senior citizen gives MCA ear bashing
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An elderly man at the "Malaysian Chinese at Political Crossroads" conference today lashed out at MCA members who had booed at him for accusing the party of sacrificing Chinese education.

71-year-old Goh Kim Seng from Pantai Remis, Perak, had questioned MCA's boast that in 1996, it had assisted in amending a 1961 law which had abolished the right to convert a Chinese school to a national school at the minister's discretion.

"MCA said it helped abolish this law, but in 1961, how did this law come about in the first place? Was MCA one of the culprits?" he said.

Goh, later, grew even more emotional, shouting at the panelists consisting of Deputy Education Minister Wee Ka Siong Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman Institute of Chinese Studies Dean Ho Khai Leong, MCA Youth Education Bureau Chief Chong Sin Woon and Bukit Bendera MP Liew Chin Tong.

"MCA is responsible for this," he shouted angrily during the session on Chinese education, which triggered a chorus boos from MCA members seated at the back.

Enraged, Goh started to advance on them and lashed out: "Don't shout at me! I'm an old man! You are younger than me, don't be rude!"

However, bodyguards quickly moved in and escorted Goh out of the conference hall without incident.

'Chinese split allowed conversion rule'

Taking the stage later, Wee clarified that Malaysians had to understand the historical context within which the law came into effect.

"At that time, there were only Chinese and English schools, and the Chinese community enrolment in both schools were split about 50 percent each so even within the Chinese community they were divided," he said.

But today, Wee added that the abolition of English schools as national schools had resulted in the Chinese school enrolment to spike 95 percent from the Chinese community.

Wee said that efforts to amend the law only succeeded in 1996 even though support of Chinese school had gradually risen as then Education Minister Anwar Ibrahim had opposed it.

After the conference, Goh marched up to Wee to complain: "Your members are very rude, you must educate them, but you are okay."

Wee then put his arms around Goh's shoulder as the two made up.

Another elderly person, a Sabahan who had questioned whether a majority of officials in the Education Ministry were Umno members during the same session was also subjected to boos.

The senior citizen later strode up to them and shouted: "I'm old enough to be your father!".

Arguments against monolingual schools

Earlier at the conference, DAP's Liew had said that today's debate need not have been constrained within

the narrow confines of Chinese education had the government broken free of Umno's mono-lingual mentality.

"The reality is Malaysia is sitting on a language gold mine. This is a national asset yet we are not treating diversity of languages as it.

"Ask ourselves, where do we get the idea that schools must be taught in one language? Why not two or three?" he said.

The monolingual ideology, said Liew, was perpetuated by Umno and government policies have always been within this context.

Liew argument was met by a deafening silence on the part of MCA members. The DAP presence was poor with most expected to turn for the finale of the verbal clash between MCA president Chua Soi Lek and DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng later today.

"If we can break free from Umno's ideological position and see all languages as something that can be promoted, then we can have a new deal, we will not have to be bargaining for 10 or 20 Chinese schools," he said.

He added that if the country embraced its multilingual heritage, Malaysians would stand to benefit greatly as China, India and Indonesia are rising powers in the region.

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