

MCA veep: Sports betting U-turn 'regrettable'
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Cracks are appearing in MCA over the Umno supreme council's decision to reverse the federal government's move to legalise sports betting.

gan ping sieu on sport betting 250610 02In a statement today, MCA vice-president Gan Ping Sieu (left) said that this was "regrettable", in contrast to party president Chua Soi Lek's statement yesterday that the party "respected" the government's decision.

"I regret that the government succumbed to political pressure to revoke its earlier decision to legalise sports betting," said Gan in a faxed statement today.

Gan was probably suggesting that the government was bowing down to intense pressure by political rivals and threats of a major protest on July 3.

"From day one, this issue has been politicised to the hilt by Pakatan Rakyat leaders who were posturing for selfish interests."

Gan described the government's decision as a "shame" because it has lost a "golden opportunity" to regulate sports betting, which has hitherto been a thriving underground economy.

"Had sports betting been legalised, the government would have been able to manage and mitigate the social impacts that come with the industry," he added.

MCA's position independent

He also dismissed suggestions that MCA was forced to toe the government line, when they showed support for sports betting last week, at a time when the issue was still undecided.

kelantan sports betting judi protest bachok 280510He said that the MCA only made its stand after the party's presidential council deliberated over the matter at length.

"In this respect, I call on all local councils, especially in Pakatan-controlled states, to properly enforce guidelines on operation of cybercafes.

"It is an open secret that many of these outlets are a front for gambling activities involving youngsters," he said.

MCA, along with MIC and PPP, was dealt a major blow after coming out to defend the federal government's unpopular decision to legalise sports betting operations.

Facing intense pressure from within and without Umno, prime minister and Umno president Najib Abdul Razak finally announced on Friday evening that the licence for sports betting operators would be scrapped.