

**Give MCA due respect, Umno told
Malaysiakini.com
Apr 16, 2008
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In an apparent reference to Umno, MCA has called on other Barisan Nasional (BN) component parties to accord it due respect in the aftermath of the ruling coalition's disastrous performance in the March 8 polls. MCPX

ong ka ting interview 140408 11"The BN cooperation must be there and it must have enough mutual respect," MCA president Ong Ka Ting told Malaysiakini in an exclusive interview at the party headquarters in Kuala Lumpur last Friday.

As the second largest Chinese-based BN component party leader, Ong said the ruling coalition must be sensitive and respectful to the need of all races following the strong message sent by voters.

By now, he said Umno leaders must be aware of what went wrong in the past which contributed to the poor showing. He also hinted for the government to accord a more equal status to the non-Malays.

"We expect the Umno leaders when they talk about something for the Malays, they must also think about the lower income group of Chinese and Indians, what plans have you got for them?

"When you implement policies to help the Malay community, what about the non-Malay community? They also have their problems," he said.

Bound by code of conduct

In the March 8 polls, BN was dealt a huge blow when it was denied its long-held two-third majority in Parliament and lost four states to Pakatan Rakyat apart from failing to wrest Kelantan away from PAS.

A major reason for this was Chinese and Indian voters turning their backs on MCA and MIC due to resentment over numerous issues.

umno 2007 pemuda keris 061107 groupThe discontent has been consistent within the Chinese community since last year. As revealed in a recent poll, the grievances were, among others, over the keris-raising incident in Umno Youth, religious controversies and economic issues.

The Chinese community showed their unhappiness with MCA - which has not been seen as vocal enough to protect the community's interest - through the poll.

The elections saw a significant reduction in the party's representation. In Parliament, from 31, the party now only has 15 representatives. At the state level, the number dwindled from 76 to 31.

Responding to this, Ong said it was merely a perception that the party - with four ministers sitting in the cabinet - has not done enough for the community.

"The problem is once you are sworn in as a minister, you cannot disclose anything to anybody and must stick to the code of conduct as a minister," he said.

'I don 't want to praise myself'

The 51-year-old president, who took over as party chief in 2003, also rejected the argument that he is 'weak' in dealing with these contentious issues.

ong ka ting interview 140408 03"I don't want to angkat bakul (praise myself) to say I am good but certainly, I have certain qualities in me and it is not as what some people perceive," he said.

However, Ong conceded that it could have been a mistake to overlook the image building part and attributed his low-profile personality to his belief in Confucianism.

"I subscribe to the Confucius philosophy and Confucianism ask us to be humble - that you can be strong but you don't need to say you are that strong," explained the Chinese-educated Ong who was a school teacher before entering politics.

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