

**Chua's outburst gets return fire from Umno, PAS**  
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KUALA LUMPUR - As expected, the outburst from MCA president Dr Chua Soi Lek, blaming Umno and PAS for using religion to compete for Malay support, has got the first salvo back.

Quick on the draw was Umno's Dr Mohd Khir Toyo (right), the former Selangor menteri besar, who warned that Chua was risking adverse reaction from the Malay community.

Khir told a web news portal that Chua's remark could cause unrest and disturb the "harmonic balance" within the country.

Khir was quoted as saying: "We do not want to start blaming each other, pointing fingers... this leads into religious arguments. This is dangerous."

Khir, who is the Selangor opposition leader, added that the MCA chief should instead focus on rebuilding his party which was already "fragmented."

He also dismissed Chua's claim that Umno had become conservative in recent years.

Malay rights group Perkasa's Dr Zubir Harun reportedly also warned Chua not to politicize religious issue, instead Chua "should concentrate on rebuilding and rebranding MCA."

Some observers have taken Chua's strong outburst as a signal that the MCA, the second largest party in the ruling coalition, is planning to shed off its status of "junior partner" to Umno.

Meanwhile, PAS leaders also reacted by saying that Chua had become "an unpopular leader" and he was trying to regain support.

Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad, the PAS Central Working Committee member, reportedly ridiculed Chua and said the MCA chief no longer has the support of the Chinese community.

The Kuala Selangor MP was quoted by an online news portal as saying: "PAS is Islam, Umno is Malay nationalism. It doesn't auger well for the MCA president to say this. He is not popular with the Chinese, so he's hoping to boost his popularity with the remarks."

khalid\_samadPASAnother PAS leader, Shah Alam MP Khalid Samad (left), reportedly said what Chua said was true for Umno in the sense that they are reacting to the situation and using Islam to meet their political end but Islam has always been the basis for PAS' existence.

Last Wednesday Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin chided the MCA for making a stand seen as similar to the DAP's over the "Allah" ban.

MCA leaders were indirectly warned to back off when Muhyiddin announced that the Cabinet had decided to impose a gag order on all parties over the issue.

Another development seen as a catalyst to a growing anger among MCA leaders was the recent prosecution of ex-party president Dr Ling Liong Sik over the Port Klang Free Zone scandal.

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