

Ong: Closed-door approach has resolved issues

KUALA LUMPUR: The MCA is fighting back against the perception that it not doing enough for the Chinese community.

In a rare move, party president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting yesterday issued a statement listing issues championed by the MCA such as the racial imbalance in the public sector, religious freedom and Chinese education.

This statement, posted on the party's website, comes at a time of growing pressure on MCA and Gerakan politicians to be more assertive when protecting the interests of the Chinese community.

Ong made it clear that the MCA understood the aspirations of Malaysian Chinese but would adopt the approach of settling problems during Barisan Nasional and Cabinet meetings.

"MCA has taken the responsible approach in dealing with problems to ensure that racial harmony is not affected.

"By presenting the concerns of the community with sound facts, solutions can be achieved whereby, at the end of the day, it will be respected by all parties," he said.

Ong denied that the MCA was pressured to issue the statement, saying that the party felt duty-bound to let the community know

it played a constructive role within the Barisan Nasional.

"Our conscience is clear. However, we need to uphold racial harmony so we will bring up the community concerns at the right forums."

He said the statement was issued in Chinese as there were numerous opinions in Chinese papers demanding to know MCA's stand on various issues.

"MCA is holding firm to its principles, and by not compromising on the community's basic rights.

"At the same time, we are maintaining the stability and harmony of the multi-racial society through the BN mechanism," he said.

Meanwhile, MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said sensitive issues such as religious and economic matters should be discussed behind closed doors.

He said sensitive issues are bound to crop up in a multi-racial society but these should be settled via discussions in a proper forum, rather than by openly talking about it.

"We have a forum in the Cabinet and a kind Prime Minister who listens to every community.

"I think we can discuss issues internally, rather than openly, to avoid any friction," he said.