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Ong: Reject extremism

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'BN must protect rights of all communities'

KUALA LUMPUR: Barisan Nasional parties must protect the rights of all communities fairly by being moderate and reject all forms of racial and religious extremism to ensure that they can remain as comrades in the coalition.

Making this call, MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting said this was one of the four key principles that were essential to ensure the continuation of Barisan as a team for the next 50 years.

The other three points were:

> To hold strong to the spirit of social contract and principles of the Federal Constitution as agreed to by the founders of the coalition during the time of independence to ensure the protection of the rights of all communities.

> All component parties should steadfastly practise a healthy political philosophy and culture, and encourage a culture of integrity so that the people will feel more confident in supporting us.

> The leadership of the component parties should be wise, visionary, progressive, innovative, and together have the capability to improve the country by overcoming the challenges of globalisation and today's high technological age.

"Discussions and constantly tak-



Historic moment: Ong making his presidential address at the opening of the 54th MCA annual general assembly at Wisma MCA in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

ing into consideration the desire as well as the sensitivities of all communities is still the main or guiding principle of Barisan to bring our multi-racial society to greater success," Ong said in his presidential address at the opening of the 54th MCA annual general assembly at Dewan San Choon here yesterday.

Barisan Nasional chairman and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi opened the assembly.

"Today, just like 50 years ago, I stand before this historic MCA AGM to reaffirm our full support and our confidence in you, our Prime



Minister, to set the tone and to lay the foundation for the country for the next 50 years.

"Datuk Seri, your moderation, fairness and leadership qualities have given us the belief and confidence to work with you for our future generation," he said.

Although the MCA, as a party, champions the rights and interests of the Chinese community within

the Government, Ong said the stand and perspective of the party had always been one of fairness and to protect the interests of all communities.

Dismissing accusations by the opposition parties that the MCA did not dare protest openly on sensitive issues as a political trap, Ong said such issues needed to be handled internally without hurting the feelings of any community.

▶ See Nation 6, 8, 31 and 33

Raids on tuition centres to be stopped
Full text of Ong's keynote address