

MCA ready to act as go-between

Press Digest

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MCA is ready to act as the go-between should Dong Jiao Zong (DJZ) want to interact with Umno, *Sin Chew Daily* reported yesterday.

Saying the party will be happy to play the role, secretary-general Datuk Ong Ka Chuan, stressed that "both parties should be prepared and not meet for the sake of meeting".

He said this when asked by the daily to comment on former Dong Zong (United Chinese School Committees Association) president Kuek Sian Hiang's call for DJZ to make an overture to Umno and for MCA to set up a meeting between the Chinese educationists and the prime minister.

Ong hoped that by getting DJZ and Umno to talk to each other, DJZ will get to understand how MCA had negotiated with Umno in the past on the need to develop Chinese education.

He said this will help clear the misconception a certain group has about MCA regarding Chinese education.

"MCA and Chinese education groups are on the same side on the issue of Chinese education. We also hope the future will be brighter for Chinese education (in Malaysia)," he said.

Ong said DJZ is welcome to join MCA in standing up for Chinese education. "This way, the Chinese community will have a better insight of

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the problems we face in our fight to protect and develop Chinese education."

He said there is no reason for MCA to scuttle any request to develop Chinese education.

In fact, he said, MCA leaders had worked with Umno stalwarts on the subject and "made them understand that developing Chinese education is not a 'what Chinese gain, Malays lose' zero-sum game".

He said between 1999 and last year, MCA had succeeded in fighting for the building of nine Chinese primary schools and the relocation of 58 others.

Ong said MCA has no intention to marginalise or hurt DJZ as both are on the same front as far as Chinese education is concerned.

He agreed MCA and DJZ differed in their approaches to the Chinese education issue but they have the same objectives in fighting for the betterment of Chinese education.

He said MCA is not DJZ's enemy. "On the issue of Chinese education, what DJZ wants to do is what we have to do. The only difference is how to go about achieving the same goal."

He explained that MCA, being a political party, has to observe certain procedures in negotiating with the prime minister, education minister and Umno leaders on Chinese education.

He said there is much room for cooperation between MCA and Dong Zong chief Dr Yap Sin Tian.

Yap, when contacted by the daily on Monday, declined to comment on his predecessor's call for the DJZ to work with Umno, saying he was busy with his meetings.