

# Internal conflicts must stop: Ong

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Internal party conflicts have caused MCA candidates to lose in general elections in the past, its president, Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting, said yesterday. "I do not want to sweep things under the carpet. We will face and admit it (that internal conflicts among the grassroots party leaders cost the party seats)," he told reporters after the party's extraordinary general meeting.

Expressing concern over what was described as a "cancerous tumour", Ong said the problem must be resolved before the next general election.

"If we fight among ourselves, we will only kill ourselves," he said, adding it

would be superfluous to do a post mortem once the party has lost a seat.

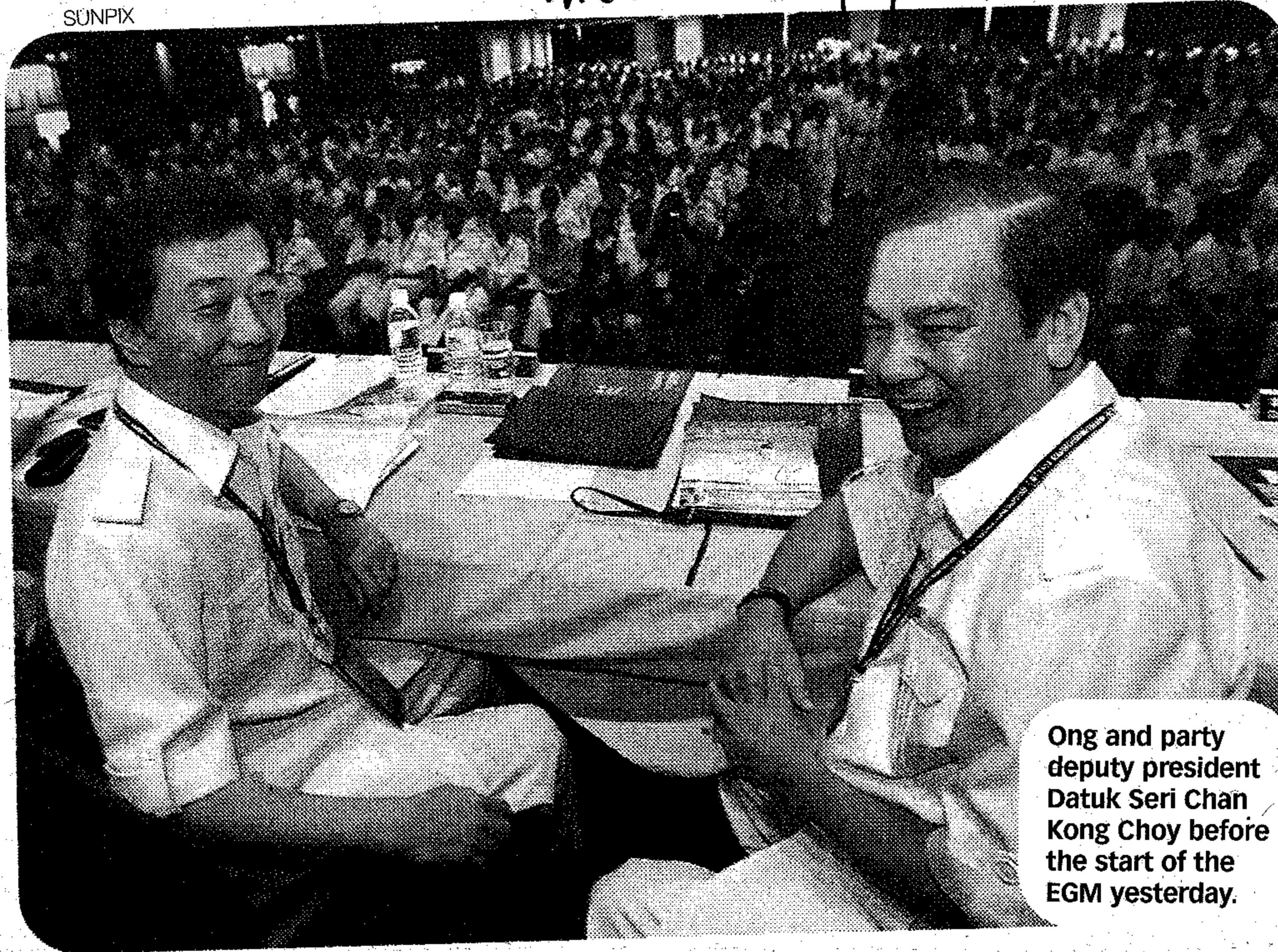
He said losing a seat means the party's power in mainstream politics is reduced and that equals to the Chinese community losing a voice.

"We have about a million members nationwide, but if the number cannot be translated into votes, it is a waste," he said.

In the past, conflicts among central leaders of different camps were inadvertently passed down to their grassroots,

"Even when the conflicts between the central leaders had been settled, the grassroots carried on their war," Ong said.

"We saw it happen during several by-elections where some grassroots leaders took



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Ong and party deputy president Datuk Seri Chan Kong Choy before the start of the EGM yesterday.

revenge to undermine their opponents inside the party who were the party's candidates.

"They influenced their members to vote for the

opposition or simply to refrain from voting, to embarrass their 'opponents'.

"We do not want the members to fight with each other while facing the

general election as it will cause negative effects."

This was one of the reasons why the party amended its constitution yesterday to enable the

leadership to postpone the party polls, if it is too near the general election.

The amendment adds a new provision to Article 167 to allow the central committee to postpone the party election to a date not later than three months after the general election.

However, the committee can only invoke this if:

- » there is a pending general election;
- » the last general election was held more than 42 months ago; and
- » two-thirds of the committee members are of the opinion that it is in the interest of the party's preparation for the general election.

Ong said if the general election happens to be held this year, the central committee would not have to exercise the power as the next party election is scheduled for August next year.

Asked if the party would be able to solve the problem before the general election, he said it will not be easy but the central leadership will work with state party leaders to inculcate the right principle to the grassroots.