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PETALING JAYA: Both the leaders of MIC and MCA have indicated they do not favour open or public discussions of their respective communities' socio-economic concerns, preferring instead to address them in private with the government.

The MIC will not talk openly on issues involving the economic interests of the Indian community, but will stick to its approach of closed discussions with the government, said its president, Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, yesterday.

"Anything involving the economic interests of the Indian community, I always discuss it with the prime minister and even with the other cabinet members. We will not discuss it openly. That is my policy," he told reporters after launching a Deepavali and Hari Raya road safety campaign in Sungai Buloh.

He said while he did not think anyone should be shut up, such matters should be raised in the appropriate forum.

"We have a prime minister who is kind enough to listen to every

MIC, MCA favour private discussions

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community and we have a deputy prime minister who has said that information sought will be given," Samy Vellu said.

It is thus better to discuss the matter with the two leaders than publicly and prevent any friction from arising.

"In a multi-racial community, from time to time there will be this kind of problems which will arise but we have to settle it by discussion," he said.

MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting also favours internal meetings. In a statement posted on the party's Mandarin website on

Monday, he said MCA will not compromise the fundamental principles and rights of the Chinese community.

"In order to present the Chinese community's views effectively, MCA has to use strategic ways to put the views forward. We opt to raise issues in internal meetings," he said.

He said the party was aware of the challenges faced by the Chinese community in certain sectors, such as non-bumiputra representation in the civil service, foreign investment and distribution guidelines, scholarships for top

Chinese students, religious freedom, development of Chinese schools and loans for small- and medium-sized enterprises.

He said the party has clearly stated the interests of the Chinese community and proposed several "reasonable" suggestions in Barisan Nasional and cabinet meetings.

"All this while, MCA has proactively dealt with and settled the issues. We will not slow down our efforts now," he said.

Ong said the party, however, has to be responsible in the way it deals with the community's

problems so that the harmony among the different ethnic groups is not affected.

"We'll get our friends in the other ethnic groups to understand the Chinese community's feelings and uneasiness by stating the facts and reasons," he said. "Therefore, a reasonable solution will be found in the spirit of respecting each other."

On the bumiputra corporate equity share issue, Ong said all the parties concerned should identify the crux of the matter together and not to prolong the dispute.

A report by the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute's (Asli) Centre for Public Policy Studies said the equity share could be about 45%, higher than the official 18.9% figure.

"MCA thinks that academics should be given space to present their research report. The government and other parties concerned should deal with the research with an open mind," Ong said.

The party will study the statements by the Chinese community leaders and academics carefully and raise their views to the government's attention in policy-making meetings, he said.