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WELCOMING THE AUSPICIOUS “MONKEY”

The Chinese community ushered in the Year of the Monkey with great joy and festivity. In keeping with the rich Malaysian tradition, there were numerous open houses held throughout the country.



Dato' Seri Ong Ka Ting led the tossing of 'Yee Sang' with YAB Dato' Seri Abdullah, Dato' Seri Najib, Tun Mahathir and other VIPs at the MCA CNY Open House

An energetic and colourful lion dance performance kicked off the Chinese New Year celebrations at the MCA open house on the first day of Chinese New Year with more than 5,000 guests from all walks of life and races joining in the festivities. There was an array of food and various performances at the Dewan San Choon in Wisma MCA as families and friends took the opportunity to wish each other Gong Xi Fa Cai and meet up with the nation's leaders.

Led by party president Dato' Seri Ong Ka Ting and wife Datin Seri Wendy Ong, the MCA family was out in full force to greet their guests, including Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, his deputy Dato' Seri Najib Tun Razak and wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, and former MCA president Dato' Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and wife Datin Seri Ena Ling. Also present was MIC president Dato' Seri S. Samy Vellu

Terengganu says no to Kongs Raya gathering



The PAS led State Government refused to issue permit to hold a CNY open house in Terengganu

and wife Datin Seri Indrani, other Cabinet ministers and foreign dignitaries. Among the highlights of the open house was the sneak preview of the five-member China-Beijing Opera troupe, which will be performing in Malaysia in March. Popular local designer Eric Tho showcased his stunning batik collection, which incorporated elements of Chinese design. The VIP guests also joined Ong and his wife in tossing the 'yee sang'.

MCA and Gerakan also held joint open houses in Penang. Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was among 10,000 people who attended the inaugural joint open house at the Penang International Sports Arena. The Prime Minister described the good co-operation between MCA and Gerakan as a positive sign for the future. "I believe this co-operation would not be limited to Penang. I hope it will trigger a nationwide collaboration in states where the two parties are active," he said. Also at the joint open house were MCA president Dato' Seri Dr Ong Ka Ting, Health

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Great spirits have
always encountered
violent opposition
from mediocre
minds

- Albert Einstein -

Note from the Editorial Board

At fifty-five, MCA comes to an age of maturity. The party anniversary theme "Moving Forward: Progress With The Times" denotes where the party will be heading under the able leadership of Dato' Seri Ong Ka Ting.

MCA has gone through many upheavals, tribulations, struggles and challenges these fifty-five years. With this comes the experience and knowledge of how to handle each and every obstacle. Problems faced by the leaders in MCA - from our founding fathers to the current leadership had given the party more strength. The problems had, at times, exerted us to the limits but it certainly had strengthened our nerves and sharpened our skills. In the words of Dato' Seri Ong Ka Ting, "the party has reached an age of maturity – wiser, more determined, foresighted and capable of bringing about results to the people." In an exclusive interview with The Guardian, the President speaks about the party as it turns fifty-five, the general elections and the opposition. An article rekindling the history of the party is also featured.

With general elections just around the corner, all MCA members must work hard to ensure victory for the MCA and Barisan Nasional. The future is in the hands of the voters and with a good track record, the MCA is determined to work for the community. A mandate from the people will be important especially for YAB Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who took over the helm on November 1st last year. Since assuming the role as Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Abdullah had put in place many policies that have been well received both locally and internationally. With the interest of the people close to his heart, the nation is in good hands and we should all rally strongly behind the Prime Minister. The opposition had all this while sensationalise issues and they do not have the capabilities and experience to rule the country. DAP has no clear vision while PAS is out there to disrupt the social peace and harmony of the country. Voters need to be weary of the opposition. PAS move to reject permits to hold Chinese New Year gatherings in Kelantan and Terengganu recently are just a case in point. We certainly do not want to jeopardise the future of the nation. The Guardian believes that the voters will make the right choice.

HAPPY READING!

INTERVIEW WITH MCA PRESIDENT

MCA President Dato' Seri Ong Ka Ting is upbeat as he talks about the party. Although there is much to be done, he is determined and resolute. In an exclusive interview, he tells The Guardian his plans and talks about the party and the coming General Election.



As MCA turns 55, what is your message to party members and the Chinese Community?

If we look at the world today, there are not many political parties that can last that long but yet remain in power and relevant. MCA is one of the few parties that had been able to achieve this. To this extent, we are doing well although we hope to do better in the near future. These 55 years signifies the experiences accumulated as well as the wisdom we had accrued through the challenges and problems we went through. In that process, we have resolved many problems for the people. MCA through a few generations of leaders has enough exposures dealing with different types of complex problems in a multi-racial society. This is indeed a big achievement for the MCA. The long existence of the party is something, which party members and the Chinese community should appreciate and be proud of.

The people, particularly the Chinese community should give mandate to the party knowing that the MCA had gone through such a long history. With 55 years of experience, background, knowledge and continued efforts for the people, MCA is the party that the community should look up to. The party has reached an age of maturity- wiser, determined, foresighted and capable of bringing about results to the people. MCA is also one of the founding political parties who fought alongside with UMNO and MIC for the Independence of the country. It is a fact that no one can take away from us. You can't have another Chinese party go back in time to create history again. This is a real asset for MCA. The founding fathers of the party and subsequent MCA leaders had work along with other leaders from the alliance to build a political structure that is constructive and had proven to be the best formula for Malaysia. To this end we must further strengthen the structure by supporting the party so that it can function better.

The theme “Moving Forward: Progress With The Times”, does this reflect where the party will be heading in the near future?

The world and society has changed rapidly and MCA has to cope with these changes. We must keep reinventing ourselves. We need and we will cope with these changes by rejuvenating and revitalising ourselves – making the party dynamic and modern without losing its traditional touch. MCA must adapt to these changes, to progress with the times and be strong enough to fit into the latest developments in the face of globalisation.

At the recent launch of the MCA membership drive, the response from the young people was overwhelming. Many MCA leaders were deeply encouraged by this. What are your comments on the support from the young people?

Well, I was overwhelmed at the launch of the membership drive. I sensed that the young people who filled up the entire Dewan San Choon were like me before. They have a lot of love for the country and the community. Of course they have their own ideals. Just that they want to know how they could contribute their ability, talents and knowledge to the community and country. It was with this kind of enthusiasm that they attended the launch. They were trying to see how they could fit in. I am sure if the correct information and message are disseminated and conveyed effectively to the young people, there would be more who will join the MCA. On that day, after listening to some of us (MCA leaders) speaking to them, I can see that their awareness and acceptance for the party had been so much better. This will be one of the priority areas and MCA has decided that after the National launch, we will be moving to other states and have more membership drives. Taking in more young members will definitely be an important agenda in the future.

What are the projects closest to your heart since assuming the role as Party President? What you intend to implement and hope to achieve in the next few years?

There are many things, which I want to achieve. First was the unity of the party. Reuniting the party was an immediate task of utmost urgency. Then to bring the party closer to the community through the Chinese associations and subsequently with all the Chinese based political parties. To achieve real harmony and close rapport and co-operation within the party and Chinese community was also another immediate task. Since I took over the last nine months, I had spend time and given quite a bit of attention on this. We are moving quite well. When we organised a big dinner gathering to send the right message to Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on his appointment as Prime Minister, we were all together as one.

Another area of focus is to address the concerns of the Chinese community and to understand their aspirations well. From there we have to move in accordance with their aspirations within the context of a multi-racial society. Things such as the mother tongue education, the development of the Chinese Vernacular Schools and the opportunity to learn the mother tongue language while at the same time strengthening the proficiency levels of English for the betterment of the younger generation are all matters of concern. The Chinese community has always focused on Education and they want to maintain the traditional part of its culture, keeping all the good traits and values suitable for the modern times while at the same time discarding all the bad ones. We want to be part of the nations' constructive building force. The Chinese in this country wants to work hand in hand and side by side with other communities.

I am also focusing on building up a good pool of strategic thinkers in the form of a think-tank. We want to establish a good source of research panels to help the party so that we can have enough planning and papers. We want substance for the party and more concrete action plans for the future.

At this juncture, while still working on all these important agendas, the election mode crept in and now the whole party machinery is focusing on the elections. Some of the things we have been doing before this will have to be continued after the General Elections. We hope to get a good and better mandate for the MCA and Barisan Nasional. We hope to convince most of the Chinese voters to understand that voting for Barisan Nasional means voting for real stability, real development of the country and voting for the betterment of the future generation. Their vote will also be a show of support for the respectable, popular and able leadership of Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who has spelt out his policies,

vision and plan of action since assuming the role of Prime Minister on November 1 last year.

I am also paying quite a bit of attention in helping out the New Villages all over the country. There is currently 452 New Villages and majority of these people were our forefathers. They were resettled in the new villages during the Emergency. The present generation has gone through very difficult times. The living conditions, environment and quality of life are areas I am focusing on.

At the same time , just as I was working on a Life Long Learning Campaign for the community, the election mode intensified. We will continue with the campaign after the elections.

How will you describe your relationship with Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and his deputy Dato' Seri Najib Tun Razak?

We have very good relationship working together with Dato' Seri Abdullah and Dato' Seri Najib. The Prime Minister is highly respected and well received by the rakyat. He is kind hearted, firm and a fair Prime Minister. The Deputy Prime Minister has vast experience, wisdom and dynamism. Basically, the top MCA leaders have very good relationship with them. We have a good team and we can come to an agreement and consensus on a lot of important issues faced by the Barisan Nasional.

At this stage, everybody is talking about general elections, how prepared is MCA and will the party be seeking for more seats.

We are prepared at all levels. We do not prepare for elections just for the last few months. In fact we have started working since the 1999 General Election. MCA elected representatives had been working hard serving the people very well. Those records and performance are also part of the preparation work that we had put in. With the new election delineation exercise, we have additional 25 parliamentary seats and 63 State seats. Naturally, major Barisan Nasional component parties will bid for additional seats and in this regard the MCA will also be requesting for more seats.

How many new faces will there be from the MCA?

We have not decided on how many new faces will be filled but there are some existing elected representatives who have volunteered to step down due to one reason or other. For cases such as that, they will certainly be replaced. For the new seats there will also be new faces.

Candidates standing for the coming General Election have to fulfil certain basic criteria. Among others, they must have a dedicated and devoted attitude to serve the people. They must put the interest of others above self, be well accepted by the party, be committed to MCA's struggles,

be a team player and understand the multi-racial society and people at large.

The candidates must be clean and be free from financial burdens. This means that we do not want to field anybody if we know that they are already in serious financial woes as we do not want a situation where they may be sued and be made a bankrupt later. We also want candidates who are physically healthy, who can really serve the people and we want people who are credible. The candidates must meet the highest standards as the people will be placing trust in them.

Do you see PAS as a threat to the Barisan Nasional?

PAS will continue being double headed, using their old tactics. On one hand they will speak to the Muslims in a very extreme manner and when they speak to the non-Muslims, they will try to offer some sweets. This contradicts with what they have said in front of the Muslim community. As they are inconsistent and do not have an acceptable long-term direction for the multi-racial society, I don't think PAS is a party the people can trust.

However, having said that, PAS should not be taken lightly as in the 1999 General Elections, the party had managed to capture Terengganu and Kelantan. We should not underestimate PAS.

The way they play politics and their tactics. We have to be weary of them. I believe BN should work hard and expose their true colours and let the voters know their tactics and the threats will not be so big.

Basically, the non-Muslim voters do not like PAS. We know very well that that they are trying to destroy the spirit of the Federal Constitution, which had successfully held us together since Independence. PAS certainly won't want the current Federal Constitution to stay. They have repeatedly stated that they want to amend the Federal Constitution. They want to use the PAS way of fanaticism and politicising religion to rule the country. This can be frightening and very damaging to the non-Muslim communities. We take them as a threat because they mislead the voters. We can overcome this threat if we effectively and successfully make the people see through that PAS cannot be trusted and that it is a dangerous party for the country.

How about the DAP? The party had tried hard to disassociate itself from PAS to endear itself to the Chinese.

The DAP doesn't have a clear vision and is interested only in exploiting and sensationalising issues. They can't deliver. Their influence is waning. Openly, they say that they have nothing to do with PAS but yet in reality they have some kind of co-operation. The party is nowhere near the track records of the BN. However, we must be cautious of DAP's ability to use all kinds of tactics to garner votes. I am confident the people can see this through and all the gimmicks put up by the opposition.

What is your message for the voters?

The BN has gone through a lot of struggles to achieve Independence for the country. It has built a successful and stable nation to what it is today. If the voters understand the history of all the parties that are contesting for the election, they should not be hesitant or have second thoughts about giving a vote of confidence to the BN.

The opposition is only out to fish for votes during the elections. They do not have the capabilities and experience to rule the country. They are not there to really give the people an alternative. Instead, they are splitting the votes. I am confident on the maturity of the voters to

make the right choice for a better future, for a more moderate Government that is sensitive, well balanced and can take the country to greater heights

Do you think that the Barisan Nasional would have a landslide victory this time around?

It is a bit too early at this stage to use the word 'landslide' but we will certainly work hard to have the biggest victory that we can.

A bigger mandate from the people means more stability. A Bigger mandate means a bigger voice from the community. To this end, it means that the government will have to work harder in return to repay for the people's support.

We want to see a good victory and not just an ordinary victory. At the end of the day, a vote of confidence will benefit the people in the long run.



-Lim Eng Leong-

Rekindling 55 Years of the MCA

- By Ngoo Yee Jin -

In every sense, the MCA has come a long way. Born 55 years ago on 27 February 1949, the party can look back and count the milestones that it marked, sometimes with much anguish. But, the party has displayed a resilience that has enabled it to withstand all tests. Today, the party under the able leadership of Dato' Seri Ong Ka Ting stands ready to take on new challenges, drawing on its considerable experience and resources that will help it to emerge stronger than never before.

1949: MCA was formed to provide a political vehicle for the Chinese community. It was born out of a need to save the Chinese in Malaya from being repatriated to China by the British. The party assisted the Chinese to resettle in new villages, providing food, medicine, monetary aid, piped water and electricity. The late Tun Sir Tan Cheng Lock was the key man behind the formation. He was also the inaugural president.

1950: The MCA started a welfare lottery to raise funds for the needy Chinese in over 600 new villages. The MCA helped rebuild their homes

1951: Tun Tan led an MCA delegation to submit a memorandum to the British expressing dissatisfaction of non-Malays for being neglected in the provisions of the Constitution of the Federation of Malaya.

1952: The MCA and UMNO formed an alliance to contest the Kuala Lumpur Municipal Council election on Feb 26 and subsequently local elections in 16 other municipalities.

1953: An anti-Communist self-defence force was formed by the MCA in December with over 70, 000 members. The British disallowed political parties from operating lottery and the MCA was compelled to stop operation of the welfare lottery.

1954: The three-man Alliance delegation comprising Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Abdul Razak and T.H.

Tan went to England for talks urging that elected representatives form the majority in the upcoming first elections to the Federal Legislative Council.

1955: The first Alliance self-government was formed on August 2 with Tunku Abdul Rahman as Chief Minister. MCA was represented by Leong Yew Koh (Health and Social Minister), H.S. Lee (Transport Minister), Ong Yoke Lin (Telecommunications and Post Minister) and Too Joon Jin as Assistant Education Minister. Tunku lead peace talks with CPM leader Chin Peng in Baling. The MCA representatives were MCA President Tun Tan Cheng Lock, Alliance Secretary General T.H. Tan and Too Joo Hin. The talks failed.

1956: Tunku led an Alliance team to England to hold independence talks with the British. H.S. Lee and T.H. Tan represented MCA. The British agreed to Malaysia's independence by August 31, 1957.



1957: Tunku and MCA leader Ong Yoke Lin went to England to discuss a draft constitution. Malaya declared Independence on August 31 and the Tunku became the first Prime Minister.

1958: Changes in MCA leadership following party elections with Dr Lim Chong Eu defeating Tun Tan Cheng Lock with 89 votes to 67 votes to become the second party president. Tun Tan then announced retirement from politics.

1959: Dr Lim demanded MCA be allocated 40 out of the 104 parliamentary seats in the general election and also exerted pressure on Chinese Educational issues. Tunku rejected the demands. Dr Lim resigned from MCA failing to get unanimous support from the Central Committee. Dr Cheah Toon Lock was appointed acting president.

1960: The state of Emergency was lifted but the threat from CPM remained.

1961: Tan Siew Sin, son of Tun Tan Cheng Lock, was unanimously elected new MCA president. Dr. Cheah declined to contest the presidency.



1962: Indonesian President Sukarno launched *Konfrontasi* campaign against Malaya.

1963: Malaysia was formed on September 16 comprising the states of the peninsula, Sarawak, Sabah and Singapore.

1964: The second general elections took place on April 25 with the Alliance securing a landslide victory. The MCA won 27 out of 33 seats contested, crushing Singapore's People's Action Party (PAP)

1965: Singapore left Malaysia to become an independent nation. Following the separation, the PAP in Malaysia changed its name to Democratic Action Party (DAP) to continue its rivalry with the MCA.

1966: The MCA was urged to adopt the Chinese language for official use. The central committee took a softer stand, proposing wider use of the language.

1967: The National Language Act was passed in Parliament designating Bahasa Malaysia as the national language and sole official language. No one, however shall be stopped from teaching or using other languages except for official purposes.

1968: The Kooperasi Serbaguna (KSM) was officially launched with Lee San Choon. Deputy president Tan Sri Khaw Kai Boh submitted plans to start a college, which was later known as Tunku Abdul Rahman College.

1969: The third general elections were held on May 10. Of the 33 parliamentary seats contested, MCA managed only to retain 13. MCA lost control of the Penang State Government. Two MCA Cabinet Ministers were defeated. Racial riots broke out on May 13 and a state of emergency was declared.

1970: Tunku Abdul Rahman retired as Prime Minister on September 22. Tun Abdul Razak succeeded him. The MCA maintained its four

ministerial positions in the Cabinet. Tan Siew Sin was re-elected as President.

1971: Parliamentary democracy was restored in Malaysia. MCA organised a meeting of representatives of all Chinese guilds and associations to launch the Chinese unity movement.

1972: Tan Sri Khaw Khai Boh passed away on April 17 and Lee San Choon was appointed Deputy President.

1973: Barisan Nasional was formed to replace the Alliance.

1974: Tan Siew Sin resigned from all party and government posts on April 8 for health reasons. Lee San Choon was appointed as acting president. At the fourth general elections, MCA won 19 of the 23 allocated parliamentary seats.

1975: MCA submitted a memorandum on education, proposing the abolition of Clause 21(2) of the 1961 Education Act to ensure that no changes would be made to the characteristics of Chinese schools.

The MCA announced the launching of five major party projects – a new party headquarters, fund raising for TAR College, membership drive, setting

MCA'S PHILOSOPHY

MCA's founding President Tun Sir Tan Cheng Lock once said, "The future of Malaya is strongly linked and related to the respective ethnic groups." With each ethnic group having the common role and interest of protecting their communities' rights in society, MCA took the approach of understanding, mutual respect and co-operation to safeguard the rights and interests of the Chinese community. This direction had proven to be an effective method in the process of collective bargaining for the interests and rights of the Chinese in a multi-racial society. This way, harmonious relations between all ethnic communities in the country are maintained while rights of the Chinese are not compromised. Principles of collective engagement in the spirit of Barisan Nasional are adhered, to ensure that all Malaysian citizens could live peacefully and contribute constructively to nation building.

up of Multi-Purpose Holdings and setting up of the Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society.

MCA Wanita was formally established.

1976: Construction of the new party headquarters in Jalan Ampang began

1977: Multi-Purpose Holdings Bhd was launched with overwhelming response from the public.

1978: The fifth general elections saw the MCA winning 17 of the 28 seats it contested.



1979: The MCA and UMNO reached a compromise on university student intakes, based on the ratio of 55 % bumiputra and 45 % non-bumiputra

1980: MCA took a stand against the 3M-education system, which it believed could change the characteristics of Chinese Education.

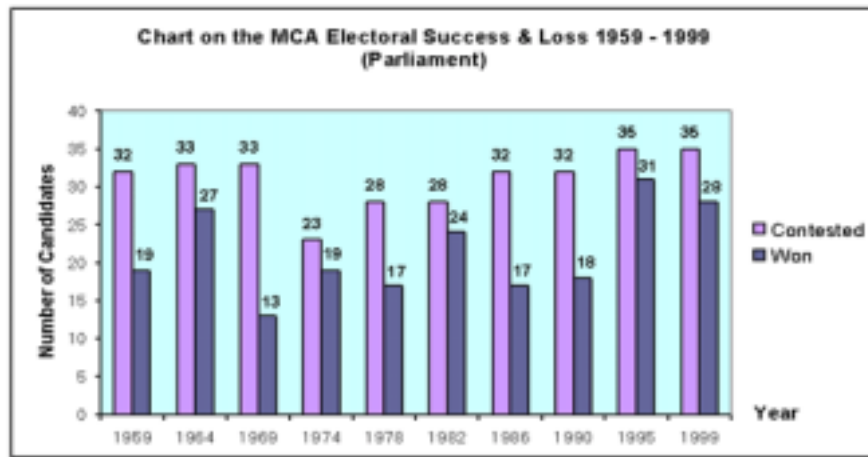
1981: Dato' Lee San Choon and five other top party leaders were returned unopposed in the party elections.

The new party headquarters was officially opened by Dato' Lee San Choon. The MCA launched the second batch of five major projects. They were Koperasi Jaya Diri (KOJADI), State Holdings Corporation, MCA Cadre Training, MCA Education Fund and MCA Cultural Centre.

1982: Dato' Lee San Choon defeated DAP Chairman Dr Chen Man Hin in the Seremban parliamentary

AIMS & OBJECTIVES OF THE MCA

- To safeguard the independence and sovereignty of Malaysia. To uphold the Federal Constitution and safeguard the system of parliamentary democracy;
- To secure and maintain the enforcement of human rights, correction of injustice and offer help for the underprivileged;
- To ensure the recognition of and the safeguarding of the legitimate rights and interests of Malaysians of Chinese descent and the legitimate rights and interests of all other communities as provided under the Constitution;
- To maintain, foster and promote goodwill and harmony among the various races in Malaysia;
- To foster, safeguard, advance and secure the political, social, educational, cultural, economic and other interests of Malaysians of Chinese descent by legitimate and constitutional means
- To consider, assist and deal problems affecting its members as a whole and to take such steps as may be necessary for their welfare and advancement;
- To promote the development and utilisation of the economic assets of the country for the benefits of the citizens of the country as a whole;
- To promote full and equitable employment for all citizens of the country;
- To work for and promote a high standard of living by increasing and improving the productivity of the country;
- To promote and maintain social justice, economic security and equal opportunities for every citizen;
- To encourage, establish and develop co-operative activities;
- To work with other political organisations with similar aims and objectives registered within Malaysia so as to encourage the healthy development of party politics;
- To preserve and sustain the use and study of the Chinese Language, and to ensure that its use, teaching or learning shall not be prohibited or prevented in the context of Article 152 of the Malaysian Constitution.



constituency. The MCA won 24 of the 28 parliamentary seats it contested.

1983/1984: At the peak of his political career, Dato' Lee San Choon announced that he was stepping down from his 10-year-post as MCA president. Despite repeated appeals, he resigned as MCA president on May 1, 1983. With the resignation, Datuk Neo Yee Pan became Acting President. A political struggle in the party, which lasted for twenty months ensued.

1985: At an Extraordinary Meeting of the General Assembly on 11th November 1985, Tan Koon Swan was elected as the new president with Dr. Ling Liong Sik as his deputy.

1986: Following Tan Koon Swan's resignation as president, Dato' Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik was elected as president. MCA managed to secure only 17 seats during the 7th General Elections.

1987/88: 24 deposit-taking co-operatives initiated by the Chinese (including MCA's KSM) were frozen by Bank Negara, putting billions of Ringgit deposited by their members into jeopardy. MCA under Dr Ling Liong Sik's leadership fought relentlessly to help the 500, 000 depositors in getting a Ringgit-to-Ringgit refund bringing a sight of relief to the Chinese community.

MCA Public Services and Complaints Department was set up in 1987 to assist the general public with their problems.

1989: At the end of 1989, another crisis erupted when the bank took action against MCA over a RM36 million loan the party took to build Wisma MCA. The problem, an aftermath of the 1984-85 leadership crises, was aggravated by the 1985 recession. To solve the problem once and for all, Dr Ling launched a nation-wide life membership recruitment campaign to raise funds. Through the restructuring of Party

assets, MCA was able to resolve its financial problems. The campaign raised RM19 million and restructuring of the party's assets raised another RM27 million. Today, Wisma MCA is fully owned by the party.

1990: The eight general elections was held, which saw the MCA's seat in Parliament increasing to 18 seats.

1991: The Government released the National Economic Consultative Council report, which to a large extent reflected the spirit and thrusts of the Malaysian Unity Plan submitted by the MCA. The report formed the basis of the National Development Policy adopted by parliament and later Vision 2020.

1992: MCA obtained approval from the Government to set up branch campuses of TAR College in Penang and Johor. The party collected over RM30 million from a TAR fund raising campaign launched by Dr Ling. The Government also agreed to give financial assistance for the College on a Ringgit-to-Ringgit basis. With the government aid, a total of RM60 million was raised for the TAR campus.

1993: MCA launched the Langkawi Project aimed at encouraging parents to adopt the right approach towards their children's education. Under the project, the MCA mobilised all its resources in a new commitment to raise the standard of education among the Chinese especially those from the rural areas. Resource centres with computers were set up and tuition classes were conducted to assist students from rural areas. In 1993, MCA expanded to Sabah.

1994: MCA launched a massive fund-raising campaign to help 60 independent Chinese secondary schools.

1995: In the ninth general election, the MCA won 31 out of the 35 parliamentary seats it contested. The

“The immediate reason for forming our party was that the Chinese who are loyal to Malaya are made to suffer under the state of emergency. The emergency not only endangered the life of many Chinese, threatening the most basic interests of the Chinese, furthermore it also led others to doubt our traditional loyalty and sincerity to this nation when most of us have considered as our permanent homeland.”



-Tun Sir Tan Cheng Lock -

1996 Education Act was passed after final efforts by the MCA to seek clarifications and rectification to some of the ambiguous provisions in the draft.

1996: Dr Ling Liong Sik was returned unopposed as president while Dato’ Lim Ah Lek was elected as the new deputy president when Dato’ Lee Kim Sai did not seek re-elections.

1997: Moves were initiated to cultivate a Caring & Sharing Culture and a wide range of projects involving education, particularly in Chinese schools and expansion of TAR college branch campuses undertaken. To encourage more women to take part in politics and in recognition of their contributions to the party, greater emphasis was made to increase the role of women leadership in the party, especially representation in local government.

When Malaysia was hit by the Asian Financial Crisis, MCA was the first to make a public stand to support Prime Minister Dato’ Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. MCA leaders also met with top leaders of Federation of Chinese Associations of Malaysia (FCAM), the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industries of Malaysia (ACCCIM) and other business leaders to exchange views on issues pertaining to the economy and to rally behind the government to face the crisis.

1998: MCA initiated a “Love Malaysia, Buy Malaysian Products” nation-wide campaign with the objectives of refuting negative foreign reports on the country and making Malaysians understand that the economic fundamentals in the country were strong enough to withstand external pressures. The campaign also targeted to promote demand for locally made products in order to save on the foreign exchange and to stimulate production in the country.

1999: MCA assisted the Barisan Nasional to victory in the 1999 General Elections when the Malay votes were split due to the Anwar factor. The opposition alliance consisting of PAS, Keadilan and DAP failed to gain support from the Chinese voters when MCA stepped in to ensure a win for the BN. MCA had supported UMNO in confronting PAS’s calls for an

Islamic Theocratic State and the implementation of Hudud Laws.

2001: MCA received the green light from the Education Ministry to establish University Tunku Abdul Rahman.

2002: Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) was launched by Prime Minister Dato’ Seri Mahathir Mohamad. An International Advisory Council (IAC) comprising of world renowned academicians and professionals was set up under the Chairmanship of Professor Wang Gungwu to prepare a platform for UTAR to foster international affiliation and collaboration with overseas and research centres. MCA launched a Fund Raising Drive for UTAR.

2003: A ground-breaking ceremony for the UTAR campus in Kampar, Perak was held. MCA president Dato’ Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and his deputy Datuk Seri Lim Ah Lek resigned from their posts, paving way for the younger generation leaders to take over the party leadership. Dato’ Seri Ong Ka Ting and Dato’ Seri Chan Kong Choy were elected as President and deputy-president respectively.

Dato’ Seri Dr. Mahathir resigned after serving the country as Prime Minister for 22 years. YAB Dato’ Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi became the country’s 5th Prime Minister. A mammoth dinner organised by MCA and other Chinese based political parties, guilds and association expressed their undivided support for the New Prime Minister.

2004: MCA launched a membership drive to attract more young members into the party. MCA celebrates its 55th Party Anniversary and prepares for the nation’s 11th General Elections.



Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi: I strive to be just and fair in my approach

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi gave a candid interview to editors from the Asia News Network in Kuala Lumpur recently.



"I cannot accept any form of extremism – religious or ethnic"

Your first 100 days: Was it tough?

I enjoyed every moment of it, going down to meet the people and feeling welcome. It's a good feeling for a politician. Everybody wishes you well, expresses support for the things that you say. I have been concentrating on the people. That is what I call developing the software.

What do you think of your achievements compared with those of Dr Mahathir?

I don't want to compare. It's frightening to compare. He is like a big orange and I am just a small orange. I don't benchmark myself against Dr Mahathir and what he had done. I benchmark against what is expected of me. Whether it is through a tough, soft or persuasive approach, that is just the style. The substance, however, must be there. It must be just and fair.

Would you be able to tackle corruption in the country?

It is for others to decide what I've been doing. I've been talking to people and to the leaders, reminding them, the private sector, too. Too often people talk about corruption as prevailing in the public sector but there are also corrupt people in the private sector. This is something that we must not allow to grow. Once it grows and becomes too big, no government would be able to stamp it out.

How are you going to do it? Won't it cause a political backlash?

Big or small, we will cast a net. I'm not thinking about political backlash, because if we do, we will get frightened. You must believe what you do is right and just and that the majority is with you. I believe everyone will be with me. But, of course, there will always be opposition. In society, there will always be some people who will oppose you but it doesn't matter. The power and support of the people is what counts. We cannot take that for granted.

About Eric Chia's arrest, does it signal the first big step of your leadership's action against graft?

It is up to you to decide. But I told the Attorney-General to look into all cases that remained unresolved and not to be dictated by the need to do it too fast. We must make sure that all the evidence is obtained. One thing I don't want to see is, because you want to hurry, justice is not done. Evidence that is collected must be strong enough to be proven and withstand questioning by defence lawyers. There has to be certainty and the case must be solid. If you think it stands only a 50% chance, don't take the matter up. This is because if the probe is slipshod, if the defence lawyer takes you to pieces, it will be very embarrassing.

Are you saying it must be 70%?

We need more than 80% to prosecute.

Are you confident of performing well in the coming general election?

We hope to do well. Not just hope but also work for it. What I have been talking about in the last 100 days is, however, not just for the election; it is for the nation and the people.

With the political transition in South-East Asia, is it time for countries with problematic bilateral relations to move forward?

Different leaders have different styles but the policies remain the same. In Malaysia, there is no change in regime; same party, just a change of leadership. The party's agenda is the same, various policies remain. Micro policies have to be adjusted according to the demands and challenges. These must be dynamic to make changes. If we are static, we will be taken over by somebody else.

What is your perception of ASEAN after visiting the countries?

There is still strong commitment towards ASEAN. We are beginning to see ASEAN as a group that is well integrated. We must ensure ASEAN develops its own market. There are half a billion people within the grouping. We must do more for our new friends – Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar – so that in terms of level of achievement, we can close the gap. When all are well together, we become a very powerful grouping economically. We also need to ensure that the region is peaceful.

As a model Muslim country, what is your stand on Islamic extremism?

I cannot accept any form of extremism – religious or ethnic. If extremism leads to terrorism, we cannot accept. We must strongly object to that. Islam does not promote terrorism or extremism but moderation and peace. Muslims must live in peace with the rest of the world.

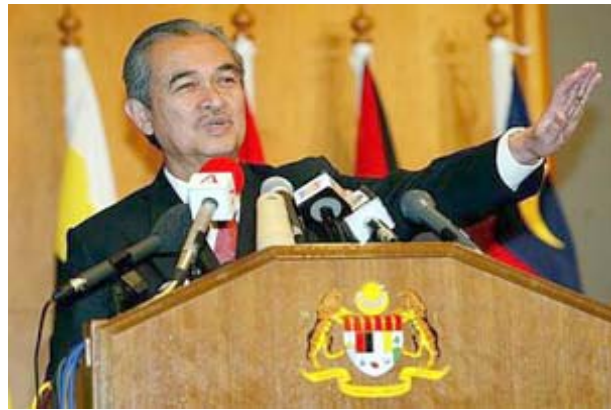
Is Malaysia playing a leading role in mobilising this stand?

I don't want to use the term leading role. We do whatever we can. We are showcasing what Islam is and the role of Islam in a multi-racial country like Malaysia. There is a lot of tolerance in Malaysia and the national unity and solidarity is an ongoing process. The country started with a strong commitment by its forefathers. They had successful co-operation to gain independence. We have shown that by co-operation, the British could not carry on with their strategy of divide and rule. Everyone wanted independence, not only the Malays and the indigenous people, but also the immigrant races. The three groups – Malays, Chinese and Indians – worked well and we have succeeded.

This has been the foundation for wider sharing of power under the present government. Ours is not a temporary coalition. Not something created because a party had problems and had no majority to form a government. A government like that doesn't last. Smaller parties will always threaten to leave when they do not get ministerial portfolios. The bigger party will always be threatened with collapse when other parties want to leave. That is why we are called a national front and not a coalition.

Is Malaysia anti-US?

Not anti-US, we have never been anti-US. Dr Mahathir was not anti-US. He was angry with (President George W.) Bush on the issues of the Iraq war, Palestine and on the US policy of unilateral action and trade issues. Trade and investment relations between the US and Malaysia are very good. As for Iraq, it was the US unilateral policy,



which I am disappointed with. I believe it should have been a multilateral action. I have visited the US and met the people who matter. I have also met Bush at the APEC summit in 2002 in Mexico. I made statements on certain things, particularly on the generalisation about Muslims. Not all Muslims are terrorists. They know what our policies are.

As a counterweight to US unilateralism, what do you think will happen?

I think what will happen is the emergence of new centres of influence. Many of the US' established friends are no longer with them, such as France and Germany. On Iraq, even within ASEAN, not everybody shares the same stand. Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines have their own policies but we remain good neighbours. This does not affect ASEAN in any way. We must see where we concur and where we differ.

Are you looking at speeding up the resolution of issues with Singapore?

Yes, we want them to be resolved as quickly as we can.

People say that you are still in the shadow of Dr Mahathir.

I don't worry about that. They will always have lots of things to say. But of course, people might now say that after 100 days, I have come out of the shadow. I measure myself against my abilities.

When are you going to hold elections?

I am still waiting for inspiration. Even my wife doesn't know when.

Does it have to be by this year?

Well, the Government has the people's mandate until the end of the year. The mandate is still good. People are not threatening us with a vote of no confidence. –STAR-

PAS TO AMEND FEDERAL CONSTITUTION IF PARTY COMES INTO POWER



PAS wants to amend the Federal Constitution based on their own interpretation of Islam. Non-Muslim communities will lose their constitutional rights if this happens. The spirit of the Federal Constitution, fought by our Founding Fathers will be destroyed. No matter how PAS reassures the non-Muslim communities, we know that they cannot be trusted.

Harakah

PAS akan pinda bukan tukar Perlembagaan

HARAKAH PAS berhasrat untuk pinda Perlembagaan Persekutuan apabila berkuasa. PAS akan pinda Perlembagaan Persekutuan untuk memasukkan prinsip-prinsip Islam ke dalam Perlembagaan Persekutuan. PAS akan pinda Perlembagaan Persekutuan untuk memasukkan prinsip-prinsip Islam ke dalam Perlembagaan Persekutuan. PAS akan pinda Perlembagaan Persekutuan untuk memasukkan prinsip-prinsip Islam ke dalam Perlembagaan Persekutuan.



PAS says that it will amend the Federal Constitution if it comes into power. In one of the issues of the party newsletter, HARAKAH, PAS President Dato' Seri Abdul Hadi Awang said inline with Islam being the official religion of Malaysia, the party will amend the Constitution to put in place Islamic principles in the document.

In a speech themed "Path to Victory" at the 49th PAS Muktamar, held last year, the PAS president stated that the coming election will be "the day of reckoning" for "the time has come for PAS to silence its critics and to tell them that that the party is prepared to form the next government."

The party is serious about this and is going all out to garner votes. Using double-headed tactics, the party will offer some 'sweets' to the non-Muslim communities. When speaking to the Muslims, they will propagate their own brand of Islam. Their often contradicting views on a number of issues makes one to cast doubts about their sincerity.

In November last year, PAS launched its Islamic State Document. The document is basically a narrow interpretation of the party's political and Islamic policy in setting up its own brand of government. At the launch, Hadi said that under the Barisan Nasional government, Islam is ruled. He clarified that PAS wants Islam to rule the country instead, where the Quran, Sunnah, and Syariah laws will be deemed supreme.

Under PAS, non-Muslims will be totally denied their roles not only in the Cabinet but also in the judiciary, legislative and security forces. In the decision making process of the PAS-led government, non-Muslims have virtually 'no say' at all, for they can only be led and ruled by PAS leaders in a theocratic state. Military service will be strictly confined to PAS supporters or believers and non-Muslims are mandatory to pay "jizyah" (a form of tax as their monetary share in defending the country).

The role of women in PAS government will be strictly confined to household keeping as well as nurturing and moulding the next generation. Women have no place in government and the Cabinet. Free enterprise will be severely curbed and PAS also aims to enhance the usage of the Arabic language. No temples or churches will be allowed to be built in Muslim areas. Listed below are other facts highlighted from the PAS Islamic State Document:

- **The Basic source of Legislation are the Quran and Sunnah**
- **Non-Muslims have passive political rights. Only Muslims who are Islamic experts have participating rights.**
- **Non-Muslims will be subjected to various administrative and social restrictions**
- **Non-Muslims will have to pay poll tax**
- **The National Culture will be overwhelmingly Islamic in orientation and substance**
- **Performances by women artistes are banned**
- **A Code of Conduct for women (including some form of hijab or modest dressing)**
- **Political Islam opposed to women political and legal rights, education, participation in the wage labour force and family planning**
- **Art, culture and literature must depict wider message of the Islamic faith**
- **Non-Muslim are allowed limited freedom in cultural pursuit but confined to private locality.**
- **Many other restricting 'do's' and don'ts that impedes the movement of the non-Muslim community**

MCA MEMBERSHIP DRIVE: SIGNING UP TO BE HEARD

People do different things for different reasons and this applies to joining political parties. CECIL FUNG speaks to young professionals about their decision to be part of the big MCA family.



The enthusiastic young crowd who attended the launch of the MCA membership drive.

The general manager of a public relations firm, Karen Cheng-Yoong, was juggling a punishing work schedule and her family commitments. Politics was something that hardly mattered to her, let alone join a political party. But over the years, she met people from all walks of life and listened to their views in the course of her work. She eventually changed her mindset. The mother of a two-year-old son began to realise that there was little point in grumbling over issues that affected her and the future of her child if she was merely an observer.

“I decided to join the MCA to make a difference. I wanted a party that represented the voice of the community and that of a plural, progressive Malaysia,” she said. Cheng, 35, joined the party three years ago without any political ambitions but she thought it was important to secure the future role of the Chinese community as the nation progressed. “Let’s preserve our culture and identity by having our voices heard,” said Cheng, who is English-educated.

Young and forward-looking professionals like Cheng are targets of a current recruitment drive by the MCA, the second largest Barisan Nasional component party, to boost its rank and file as well as re-invent itself to keep abreast with the rapid development at home and abroad. While the MCA is known for its strong grassroots network, especially among the Chinese guilds and new villages nationwide, the party realises the importance of having more professionals in order to widen its influence.

MCA president Dato’ Seri Ong Ka Ting has repeatedly stressed the need to rope in more young professionals

because their expertise would be much needed by the party to serve the people better. Of the 1.02 million-strong membership, 70% are aged 40 and above, mostly Chinese-educated, and the education level has been described as “secondary” at best. Cheng said she took up a more active role in the party recently after understanding the rationale for recruiting younger members from different backgrounds, particularly professionals.

Another new MCA member who responded to Ong’s calls to join the MCA was engineering graduate J.W. Yong, who returned to Malaysia three months ago after nine years overseas. “I hope more young professionals will sign up and help serve the community and develop the nation,” said Yong, who spent four years studying in Australia and five years working in Singapore. He now works as an application developer in information technology. Yong is among 2,000 young professionals roped into the party recently.

“Being in the MCA is also a good way to widen my social circle,” said Yong, who joined the Cheras MCA division. For many professionals, joining the MCA is an effective way to network and perhaps climb up the social ladder.

Said advertising executive Ch’ng Wai Loong, 28: “The MCA is a good platform for networking because there are many influential people in the party.” He said he chose the MCA for its good track record in getting things done. A 26-year-old executive, who preferred to remain anonymous, admitted that she decided to join the MCA because her company encouraged its staff to do so. “I don’t know much about the party but I don’t see any harm in joining it,” she said. Lee Lit Hong, who was also roped in during the MCA recruitment drive, described his joining as “the first small step towards doing something”.

“I want to be part of an active group involved in improving the Chinese community,” said the 38-year-old copywriter who, together with a few friends, joined the MCA last month. “We all want to see something done but we can’t do it on our own. Being in a group of like-minded people certainly motivates all of us.” In the case of William Chan Heng Kuen, he signed up on his own initiative in 1999. The 29-year-old manager of a cooperative, however, said he researched a little about political parties before deciding that the MCA was the best one. “I want to serve



the Chinese community and there is no better way than to join the biggest Chinese-based political party,” said Chan who is now branch Youth chairman. Sulin Lau, 26, who is among the 2,000 new recruits, said one of the reasons for joining the party was because she felt the need to connect with her roots.

“I can get acquainted with Chinese community issues, attend cultural events I never knew existed and practise what little Mandarin I know,” said the occupation corporate planner. Like many youngsters, Lau was not free from “generalised perceptions, if not misconceptions”, until she got a chance to gain a better insight into the party. Asked why she did not join the party earlier, Lau confessed: “I used to think that politics is nothing more than fishing for votes. Politics is more than that – it is about issues.”

She reckons that political participation is a medium for young people to exert their influence on policies. Lim Ngeong Fuat said he joined the MCA because he was convinced the party was a good channel to voice out issues affecting the people. He described MCA Federal Territory Public Complaints Bureau chairman Lee Boon Kok, whom he has worked with for over a year, as “a big influence” on him. “Before that, I was not interested in politics because I thought politicians were people with their own agenda,” said the sales and marketing manager. “Now I know there are a lot of politicians in the MCA who are trying to make Malaysia a better place.”

MCA’s focus on education and its achievements have also attracted many to join the party. “Supporting the MCA is supporting the party’s education projects,” said a 22-year-old information technology graduate from Tunku Abdul Rahman College (TARC). He and some friends, also TARC graduates, responded to the party’s recruitment drive recently. “Many of us would not have had a chance to do tertiary education if not for the low fees in TAR College,” he said, adding that many poor students could get scholarships and loans without much hassle. “Joining the party is one way to express are gratitude to the MCA,” said Susan Goh, 24, another TARC graduate who became a member two years ago. Goh, whose father was a taxi driver from Perak, said two of her sisters and several cousins also graduated from TARC. The college, run by the MCA since 1969, has churned out nearly 100,000 graduates to date, most of them from poor families. -STAR-

Tun Mahathir Honoured At Dinner

Over 3,000 people attended a dinner in appreciation of the leadership of former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad at The Mines Exhibition Centre recently. The event was jointly organised by five Chinese-based Barisan Nasional parties, namely MCA, Gerakan, Sabah Progressive Party, Liberal Democratic Party and Sarawak United People’s Party, and three Chinese organisations – Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Malaysia, Federation of Chinese Associations Malaysia and Seven Major Clans Association of Malaysia. Dr Mahathir said he was touched by the appreciation shown as the Chinese community no longer perceived him as an “extremist Malay nationalist.”



The Chinese Community presented a souvenir to Tun Dr Mahathir at the function.

“Today I am happy because no one perceives this anymore,” he said. He added that he spoke out for the Malays to ensure equal distribution of wealth among all the races. He said the Chinese gave him their confidence by helping other races and supporting the New Economic Policy which helped to promote unity among the various races. MCA president Dato’ Seri Ong Ka Ting, who described Dr Mahathir as “extraordinary” for his thoughts, capability, and leadership, said the Chinese community wanted to honour Dr Mahathir for his sensitivity towards their problems.



Chinese leaders, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah and Tun Mahathir tossing the ‘yee sang’.

- By Lavonne Cheah -

RM1.17m for six Chinese schools



Deputy Education Minister Dato' Hon Choon Kim has announced grants for five national-type Chinese schools and national type secondary school totaling RM1.17 million. Describing the grants as not related to the coming

general election but as an annual exercise, he said more can be expected this year. He disclosed that since 2001, the ministry had given out grants totaling RM20, 667, 500 to 273 national type Chinese Primary schools and national-type secondary schools.

MCA holds second interactive dialogue session with Chinese Guilds & Association

MCA held its second Interactive Dialogue Session with the Chinese Guilds & Associations on 8 January 2004. The first dialogue was held in November last year. MCA President Dato' Seri Ong Ka Ting said that the ideas proposed by Chinese community leaders at the recent interactive forum were very constructive and positive. He said the forum has decided that the Hua Zong will promote "Chinese Mental Revolution Movement" so that the community will appreciate their own culture. The forum also discussed ways to make the SMIs more competitive. The ACCCIM will organise a seminar with other Chinese associations and MCA. The forum also discussed on the new village blueprint. Currently, there are a million of Chinese living in the 452 villages.



From left: MCA deputy president Dato' Seri Chan Kong Choy, MCA vice president Dato' Wira Fong Chan Onn, Ong, Hua Zong president Dato' Seri Lim Gait Thong, 7 Major Clan Association president Dato' Thong Yuk Kim and MCA secretary general Tan Sri Dr Ting Chew Peh

"A Safe Society, A Society Safe for Women" Campaign

Yayasan Wanita Cemerlang recently held an anti-violence campaign. Two separate events were organised on 6 & 7 December. The first function was held at the Confucius Secondary School while the second was held at the Sekolah Menengah Mahmud, Raub, Pahang. Both events were launched by MCA Wanita Chief Dato' Dr Ng Yen Yen. Participants at the campaign were briefed on safety and the state of domestic violence in the country. As part of the campaign, a self-defence training workshop was also conducted. A booklet with pictorial guide on self-defence for women produced by the Selangor Judo Association and supported by the Women and Family Development Ministry was also distributed at both functions.



Institute CECE Dance Workshop



Institute CECE organised a dance workshop from 17 – 28 November last year. YB Chew Mei Fun officiated the workshop which was attended by over 200 hundred participants consisting of mostly pre-school educators. Children were also taught cultural dances during the duration of the workshop. A famous dance instructor from Taiwan, Ms. Jenny Two Yueh Guey taught participants interesting movements and pointers on dance musical ensemble. The dance workshop was informative and meaningful for those interested in cultural transfer through music and dance. Organising chairman Ms. Lee Swee Peng thanked Wanita MCA and the Taipei Economics Cultural Office in Malaysia for assisting in cultural transfer programmes since the programme was initiated in 2001.

Ong happy with MRSM intake



Ka Ting (third from left) with the Chinese students who received their letters of acceptance into MRSM.

This year's intake of Chinese students to the Mara Junior Science Colleges (MRSM) is "meaningful" for Malaysia as it is another step in achieving a *Bangsa Malaysia*, MCA president Dato' Seri Ong Ka Ting said. He said 255 Chinese students were accepted into MRSM at the Form Four level while 65 others at the Form One level this year. Ong, who is Housing and Local Government Minister, said the enrolment of Chinese students and other non-bumiputras into MRSM would enable the younger generation to live, learn and play in a multiracial environment. This, he said, would foster friendships among the races, who would learn to be more understanding of each other's cultures, traditions and way of life..

The number of Chinese students accepted into MRSM totalled only over 110 last year and there were more than 300 applications from Chinese students this year, Ong noted. "Out of the 65 students accepted into MRSM, 25 are from national schools and the rest from Chinese primary schools who are all high achievers," he said. Ong was speaking at a ceremony to distribute the letters of acceptance into MRSM and briefing organised by MCA Youth at Wisma MCA. Also present at the briefing were MCA Youth Chief Dato' Ong Tee Keat, MCA Youth's Education Bureau Head Dr Wee Ka Siong and Mara Education and Training Division Senior Director Mohd Hussain Ibrabim.

MCA Youth: Review police recruitment

A 20 member MCA Youth delegation recently met Federal police director of Internal Security and Public Order Dato' Sedek Ali and Federal Narcotics Department deputy director (I) Senior Assistant Commissioner Dato' Sulaiman Mohd Yusof. Youth Chief Dato' Ong Tee Keat said the wing had asked the police to review the 100-odd unsuccessful applications last year from Chinese youths who wanted to become police officers. The youth wing had asked the police to give the applicants a chance to serve the force. MCA Youth has also drawn up a five-pronged strategy to identify reasons for the decline in the number of Chinese in the police and armed forces and ways to rectify this.

MCA's effort gets the thumbs-up from US

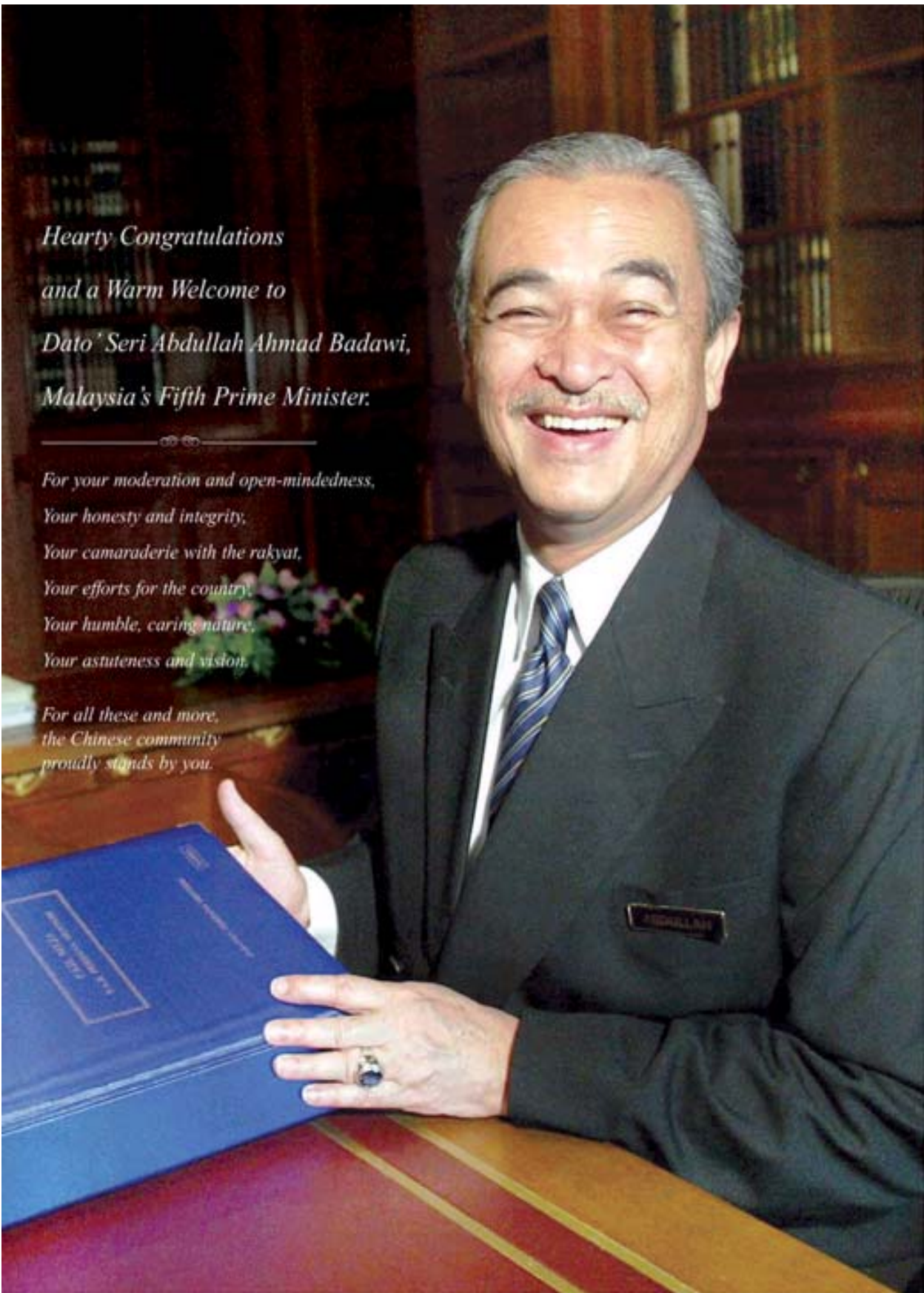
The Human Rights Watch (HRW), an NGO had recommended the US State Department to downgrade Malaysia as a Tier 3 country from the present Tier 2 as it accuses Malaysia of 'penalizing victims rather than protecting them'. In response to the recommendations, investigations were carried out and the Office to Monitor Trafficking in Persons found that there were no proof of such allegations. Instead, the Report Home Page released by the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking In Persons, US praised the MCA for its efforts in highlighting victims of the vice syndicate and creating public awareness on such problems.

Former US Representative John Miller, senior advisor to Secretary of State Colin L. Powell recently paid a courtesy call to the MCA Public Services & Complaints Department. John Miller was in Asia to address the issue of human trafficking. During the meeting, MCA Public Services & Complaints Department Head Michael Chong told Miller that the recommendations by HRW were made without much in-depth study to really understand the legal and logistic difficulties in tackling the problems of human trafficking. Chong told Miller that he had handled some 140 cases of Chinese nationals since 2002, who were cheated or tricked by international syndicates. Most of these Chinese nationals are young and naïve girls who ended being forced into the vice trade. They do not blame the Malaysian government for their predicament as syndicates from their own country lured them here. "It is also not true that Malaysia's anti-trafficking efforts have focussed on penalising victims rather than protecting them, as alleged by HRW," said Chong. "When they are rescued, the police and immigration departments will immediately investigate and identify the people behind the syndicate."

"Detailed statements were recorded from the women but most of them did not want to remain in Malaysia to testify against the syndicate, preferring to return home as soon as possible. In many cases, they were deported quickly because we do not have adequate facilities to shelter them," said Chong.



John Miller and US Embassy staffs having discussion with Chong and MCA staffs



*Hearty Congratulations
and a Warm Welcome to
Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi,
Malaysia's Fifth Prime Minister.*

*For your moderation and open-mindedness,
Your honesty and integrity,
Your camaraderie with the rakyat,
Your efforts for the country,
Your humble, caring nature,
Your astuteness and vision.*

*For all these and more,
the Chinese community
proudly stands by you.*



Continued from page 1

Minister Dato' Chua Jui Meng, Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, former chief minister Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu and state MCA chairman Wong Kam Hoong.

The Yang diPertuan Agong, the Prime Minister, royalty, politicians and tourist also joined thousands of revellers from both the Johor Straits for the country's biggest Chinese New Year party, the Kongsi Raya National Open House held at the Danga Bay, Johor Baharu. The Prime Minister of Singapore Goh Chok Tong and his Cabinet ministers also attended the function.

Many other gatherings were held elsewhere to celebrate the festivities. Unfortunate for the Chinese community in Terengganu and Kelantan, the PAS led governments refused to grant permits to allow the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism from holding the State level Chinese New Year open houses. The open houses nevertheless continued with a large turnout. MCA President Dato' Seri Ong Ka Ting says the PAS government has shown again that it is not tolerant by disallowing the open house. He hit out at the opposition government, saying that it was narrow-minded in rejecting the application for the gathering, meant for all races. "They (PAS) cannot be trusted. Whatever they have promised the Chinese community will not be realised.



Chinese New Year - A Celebration of Chinese Culture

There was an air of festivity at Kuala Lumpur's very own China Town or better known as Petaling Street. Lanterns and other festive festoons adorn the street as peddlers have a field day trading their commodity consisting of mostly traditional foodstuffs, cherry blossoms, tangerines, clothes and Chinese New Year decorative items. The street was filled with smoke from the roasting of sweet meat and people lined up in a long queue, waiting to buy meat floss and sweet meat. Meanwhile from afar, the sounds of cymbals crashing and the beatings of drums create a gaiety atmosphere. Two very auspicious lions and a 30-foot long dragon soon greet the visitors.

The scene like the one in Petaling Street could also be seen in many other places throughout the country during the Chinese New Year festivities. Today, lanterns and Chinese New Year festoons are no longer only put up by Chinese organisations. Instead, it has become a collaborative effort by the local authorities as well as the Government. Compare this with just over twenty years ago; there have been great improvements in the way that we celebrate Chinese New Year. National level open houses are also held in a very grand way. There has been a great level of tolerance, respect and acknowledgement by the government under the Barisan Nasional.

Today's generation may have come to accept these things for granted. However, it must be remembered that such things were never a given. They had to be fought for, every step of the way. To quote an example, MCA leaders at one time had to lobby for the issuance of licences for lion and dragon dance troupes to perform during the New Year. Nowadays, these troupes could perform almost everywhere without much difficulty. The MCA has from the outset of its establishment resolved to be a guardian to the cultural identity of the Chinese in Malaysia. So far, we have lived up to this expectation. There may be some set backs here and there, but the party has great determination. We would continue to be in a constructive engagement within the government for the betterment of the Chinese community and the society as a whole.

In the mean time, there is a strong need for us to be weary of parties who are all out to destroy the rights of the Chinese community. The threats are real as can be seen at the recent Chinese New Year festivities. In Terengganu and Kelantan, the PAS led government refused to grant permits for the State level Chinese New Year open houses. It was a big blow for the Chinese community. The most basic rights of the Chinese, as enshrined in the Federal Constitution had been infringed. PAS had failed to practise what it preached. The Chinese can't trust PAS.