

## **Tan Sri Ong Ka Ting (President from May 2003 – October 2008)**



### **Childhood and Education:**

Tan Sri Ong Ka Ting was born on 15 November 1956, in Lenggong, Perak to humble parents. Poverty struck the Ong family when his father passed away when Tan Sri Ong was only eight. Early in the morning before leaving to tap rubber, his mother would cook a pot of porridge, fry some groundnuts and sweet potato leaves for all her eleven children and “that would be our breakfast, lunch and tea for as long as I could remember.” Tan Sri Ong recalled that to make ends meet, he would also tap rubber and harvest tobacco leaves.

The MCA President began his primary education at S.R.J.K.(C) Kota Tampan. Former headmistress and teacher, Mdm. Ting Hwa Nang and Mr. Lee Choo King remember their student as a class monitor who was “a very helpful and responsible person even at a young age.”

Gifted with leadership qualities since childhood, Tan Sri Ong was also school captain for his alma mater, S.M. Dato’ Ahmad, in 1974. He later pursued his Higher School Certificate in Tunku Abdul Rahman College in 1976 before completing his tertiary education at Universiti Malaya, majoring in Mathematics and Chemistry in 1980.

### **Professional Career and Growth:**

Armed with a Bachelors of Science with Honours as well as a Diploma in Education, Tan Sri Ong began his career as a Chemistry teacher in Catholic High School in Petaling Jaya in 1981 until 1984.

Even as a young man starting his career, Tan Sri Ong’s outstanding capabilities were recognized by then Minister of Transport and MCA President, Dato’ Seri (now Tun) Dr. Ling

Liong Sik who took the former in as his Press Secretary in 1986. In the same year until 1990, Tan Sri Ong was Political Secretary to the Minister of Transport.

After winning the general elections in 1990, he was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health from 26 October 1990 until 24 February 1991. Tan Sri Ong was next appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Home Affairs from 25 February 1991 through April 1995, before being promoted to be the Deputy Minister of the same Ministry on 3 May 1993.

In 1999, Tan Sri Ong was promoted to become a full-fledged minister leading the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, a position he helms until today. Meanwhile, he was also Acting Transport Minister from May to June 2003.

As Minister of Housing and Local Government, the MCA President undertakes great efforts to reform matters under the purview of his Ministry. For starters, under the Town and Country Act Amendments, he drew guidelines to ensure that all town developments would allocate land for recreational purposes for the public. To safeguard house buyers' interests, the Ministry also revamped the Housing Development Act whereby a Housing Tribunal was established to settle buyers' disputes without them being inconvenienced of making legitimate claims in court. Presently, the Ministry is also studying the "build-then-sell" concept to prevent irresponsible developers from failing to deliver after taking the buyers' money. On another matter, town planners in all states had been directed to incorporate the "safe city" concept in the development of future townships. "Beside providing adequate amenities, the developers must complement the efforts of local authorities in installing features such as separation of pavements and roads, fencing and additional lighting to ensure safer surroundings."

### **Involvement with MCA:**

Tan Sri Ong's journey into politics commenced when he joined MCA in 1979. Over the years, he has wielded many positions, particularly with MCA's Youth Movement. He was National Youth Auditor, National Youth Central Committee member and Johor Youth Chairman.

On 1 November 1990, he was appointed a member of the MCA Central Committee for the 1993/96 term and on 26 June 1993, he was elected as a member of MCA's Central Committee for the 1993/96 term. In 1996, he was elected as Vice-President. In the same year, he was also appointed Chairman of MCA Chinese guilds and association's consultative bureau. From July 1999 through May 2003, he defended his Vice Presidency of MCA.

Following the resignation of then President, Dato' Seri (now Tun) Dr. Ling from politics, Tan Sri Ong became President of MCA on 23 May 2003.

The Lifelong Learning campaign was launched by Tan Sri Ong on 8 October 2004 to encourage Malaysians to embark on continuous learning be it through academia, short courses or learning new skills for self development and to be more competitive.

Since taking over the leadership of MCA, Tan Sri Ong has reduced the factional rivalry within the party, thus heralding a new era for MCA. It was during Tan Sri Ong's presidency that the MCA Presidential Council passed the General Guidelines for Public Office on 4

October 2005 which set term limitations for MCA office bearers at Party, State government and Ministerial level.

Tan Sri Ong opted not to defend his party presidency at the 18 Oct 08 party polls in view of the political tsunami of the 8 March 2008 general elections. It was during Tan Sri Ong's party presidency that the party cleared all loans with banks on 18 April 2008.

#### General Elections and as Member of Parliament

In the national political arena, although a novice running for elections, he quickly established his foothold among the rakyat when he contested and won the Parliamentary constituency of Pontian in the October 1990 general elections. Since then, he has successfully defended his seat with an overwhelming majority in the subsequent general elections of April 1998 and November 1999. Most recently in March 2004, during the country's first general elections under the stewardship of the new Prime Minister, YAB. Dato' Seri (now Tun) Abdulllah Ahmad Badawi, Tan Sri Ong won the seat of Tanjong Piai with a majority of 23,615 votes.

In the 8 March 2008 general elections, Tan Sri Ong contested and won the parliamentary seat of Kulai securing 32017 votes over DAP's 20273 with a majority of 11744.

#### **Awards and Honours:**

Tan Sri Ong's abilities and tireless services to the nation have not gone unnoticed. He was conferred the honour of Dato' Paduka Mahkota Perak which carries the title of "Dato' by the Sultan of Perak in 1997. Additionally, His Royal Highness also bestowed the award of Seri Paduka Mohkota Perak carrying the title of "Dato' Seri' in 2000. A role model for the young and old alike, Tan Sri Ong epitomizes the spirit that perseverance and devotion pay off.

#### **Service Above Self and the Importance of Education:**

His genuine concern for the less fortunate and awareness of their trials and hardship have been bred in him since his childhood. Tan Sri Ong recalled that during his university days, he gave tuition to help pay fees as he did not have much money. Never one to forget the importance of education and the needy even during meal times, he recently requested two businessmen Datuks during a breakfast to contribute to the Pin Hwa Independent High School. Tan Sri Ong places great importance on education, a never-ending life process.

In his maiden Presidential address during the 50th MCA General Assembly in 2003, Tan Sri Ong asserted that the MCA will never waver in addressing education issues such as the "development of Chinese primary education, shortages of teachers and university recruitment.' Similarly, the establishment and development of Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) and the continued pertinence of Kolej Tunku Abdul Rahman reinforces the MCA President's commitment to provide quality and affordable education to all Malaysians.

In order to spur members of the public to seek knowledge for their own personal development and growth, MCA under the leadership of Tan Sri Ong launched a Life Long Learning Campaign on 8 October 2004. The national level campaign is not restricted to the Chinese only but is aimed to benefit every Malaysian regardless of race, gender, creed, religion or age.

In addition, the President is also committed to improving the standard of living of dwellers in 452 New Villages found throughout the country. Focusing on the living conditions, environment and quality of life in the New Villages, a development blueprint was prepared recently.

**Activities:**

Active in extra curricular activities, Tan Sri Ong holds the Presidency of the Malaysian Volleyball Association (MAVA). On top of being Advisor of MAVA, he is also the Advisor to the Petaling Street Traders' and Hawkers' Association, and Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia.

**Family:**

Married to Puan Sri Wendy Chong Siew Mei, the couple is blessed with two children, Li En and Xing Yang.