

PM to new MCA leaders: Winners should not take all

NST 26 NOV 1985
From MUNIR MAJID

HANGZHOU, Mon. — "Winners should not take all and neither should losers lose everything." While congratulating the Tan Koon Swan faction which pretty well swept the board in the MCA election yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad offered this advice when commenting on the MCA election result.

Speaking to Malaysian newsmen covering his trip to China this evening, Dr Mahathir said: "The voice of the minority is also important. They have their supporters although they may not hold any posts.

"Both sides should think of the future, and their combined strength. As Barisan head, I must say that for the MCA to play an effective role in the coalition, the party must be united."

When told that neither Datuk Dr Neo Yee Pan nor Datuk Mak Hon Kam was around when the triumphant Mr Tan Koon Swan offered to co-opt them into the party central committee, the Prime Minister observed that it was too early for the defeated parties to get back in.

"They need to get the opinion of their supporters," he noted.

He further said: "The steps the new leadership will take remain to be seen — whether they will be conciliatory or adversarial."

On the future of MCA Ministers and Deputy Ministers who now hold no party posts, like Datuk Mak, Tan Sri Chong Hon Nyan and Datuk Dr Tan Tiong Hong, Dr Mahathir would only say that it was too early to decide on anything.

"There are other factors (apart from party position) which must be taken into account. They must all be considered in time, with no

rush," the Prime Minister said.

Datuk Dr Tan, who is Deputy Minister of Finance and now without a party post, has this to say: "I will review my position, assess the situation and speak to my supporters to see what they want me to do." Datuk Dr Tan is a member of the official party accompanying the Prime Minister on his current China visit which ends on Thursday.

When it was suggested to him that it was somewhat strange that he should be in China when the MCA election was taking place, he replied, with a smile: "If I had been in Kuala Lumpur, I might have been inclined to say something that could have been misconstrued."

He however did wish "to extend his congratulations to the winners, from the tranquility of Hangzhou."

Gerakan leader Dr Lim Keng Yaik, also on this China trip, extended his congratu-

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lations too to the winning side.

"The MCA has lost 20 precious months. It is time for the party to get back on the rails," he said.

But like DAP deputy leader Lee Lam Thye — also accompanying the Prime Minister — he was not too confident that the MCA had seen the back of its intra-party problems.

Mr Lee Lam Thye, while noting that the result was a "foregone conclusion", went on to observe that "the question now is how long Koon Swan will last."

He said further: "There are ambitious men in the Koon Swan team. There could be a threat from Lee Kim Sai."

Mr Tan's presidency is a mid-term one, with only one-and-a-half years to go before the next party election is due.

Former MCA deputy president, Datuk Michael Chen, now a Gerakan central committee member, on the other hand wished that the MCA would consolidate.

"The party has been split for too long," he felt. Datuk Chen is in the Malaysian team on the China trip in his capacity as Port Klang Auth-