

Ling and Lee should solve issues through discussion

Avoid contest, PM advises MCA leaders

NSP 16 JUL 1990

By Sivakumar Kuttan

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today MCA leaders should avoid a contest for the top post in the party's elections on July 28 to ensure harmony.

He said party president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and his deputy, Datuk Lee Kim Sai, should solve problems through discussions and not by challenging each other for the party presidency.

"We don't want to see the MCA facing the same problems as Umno did after the 1987 presidential election where the whole party was dragged to court. This may also happen in MCA," he told reporters after hosting a visit by 200 Orang Asli heads from throughout the country at his Seri Perdana residence here.

However, he added that if the two MCA leaders went ahead with the challenge, whoever won should be respected.

"If the loser cannot accept or respect the winner, then problems similar to the Umno problem will arise."

Asked to comment on ru-

mours that he had directed Datuk Lee to challenge Datuk Seri Dr Ling, Dr Mahathir said: "I did no such thing. I only advised them to avoid a contest."

Datuk Lee declared his candidacy for the presidential post on July 5 on his return from Singapore, where he had stopped over for two days *en route* home from a vacation in Australia.

He had said that he was challenging Datuk Seri Dr Ling be-

cause he wanted to solve the party's "unity problems".

He had also said the decision-making process in the MCA had been shifted from the central committee to the presidential council and eventually to Datuk Seri Dr Ling himself in the past two years.

Since Datuk Lee's announcement, various other issues had also come up including Multi-Purpose Holdings Berhad's take-over by Kamunting Corporation Berhad.

Dr Mahathir said he had met the two leaders before Datuk Lee announced his decision to contest.

"I have no intention to meet them again over this issue."

He expressed confidence that the contest for the top MCA post or problems relating to the party would not affect the Barisan Nasional in the coming general election.

"The two are very mature politicians and I am sure they can solve the problems in time," Dr Mahathir said.

Datuk Seri Dr Ling had repeatedly said he would try and avoid a contest until nomination day on July 23.

He had said that he would only accept Datuk Lee's challenge if all attempts to avoid a contest failed.

SELANGOR SUPPORT FOR KIM SAI: P5