

PM: AVOID A CONTEST

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By T.Selva

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad hopes there will be no contest for the MCA president's post in the party elections at the end of the month.

He said today that MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and his deputy, Datuk Lee Kim Sai, should hold discussions and find ways to resolve their problems and differences amicably.

"If possible, there should not be a contest ... that's the best," he told reporters.

He said the MCA should learn from the Umno experience: "Don't become like Umno which was taken to court and declared illegal.

"I hope MCA will not copy the same style. It is enough with Umno."

Dr Mahathir, who is the Barisan Nasional chairman, had earlier met about 200 orang asli community leaders at his Seri Perdana residence here.

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— Dr Mahathir yesterday

He said that during the 1987 Umno elections, he had advised party leaders not to have a contest but some groups disagreed and went ahead with the contest.

Dr Mahathir said he had met Dr Ling and Datuk Lee before any announcement on the decision to contest was made and told them of his stand.

He denied he had directed Datuk Lee to contest against Dr Ling. He said he had, in fact, told them during their meeting that he did not wish to side anyone.

Asked whether he would meet them again, Dr Mahathir said: "I don't think I will because I don't want to interfere at this moment."

He said if there was a contest, the loser should support the winner and close ranks after the party elections.

"MCA leaders are mature enough. They understand that if they were to do like what the people who took Umno to court did, everyone, in particular, the Chinese community, will suffer," he said.

He added: "I think they won't do such a thing."

He also did not think that a contest would affect the performance of the Barisan in the general election.

On the Commonwealth observers for the general election, Dr Mahathir said the secretariat would send a representative to Malaysia soon to see the situation and get more information.

He said the representative would meet the Election Commission and leaders of all political parties contesting in the general election.