

18 SEP 1999  
Ling-Petition  
LING TO EXPLAIN TO CABINET ON PETITION

GENTING HIGHLANDS, Sept 18 (Bernama) -- MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said today he will explain to the Cabinet the party's stand over the 17-point "Hua Tuan" petition for the general election drawn up by Chinese associations.

"We will brief the Cabinet next week on how we view the matter. I planned to do that last week but I was in Hanoi," he told reporters after opening MCA's election course for its national, state and division leaders, here, today.

The petition would not split the community but instead have brought consensus on principles, he said when asked to comment on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's advice that the people need not exert pressure on the Government to get what they wanted.

Dr Mahathir made the statement in reference to a petition drawn up by the Dong Jiao Zong and endorsed by 1,848 of the about 4,000 Chinese community organisations in the country.

"We recognised many principles...some already done like transparency and privatisation. Some are long-term principles, for example the ISA (Internal Security Act)...there will be a time it will not be relevant," he said.

On the preparation for the coming general election, Dr Ling said the party's machinery was ready and 96 per cent of the list of candidates had been finalised.

"But I won't reveal it now. We will submit it to the Prime Minister when the time comes," said Dr Ling, who celebrated his 56th birthday today by cutting a cake at the function.

He said the three-day training for about 300 leaders involves brainstorming and lectures on various issues by party leaders.

"Before, it was technical aspects. Now we brought all the MPs, state assemblymen and top leaders from all divisions to give our views on several issues," he said.

Dr Ling said he asked the participants to look back at the country's condition exactly a year ago when the stock market was crashing, interest rates shooting up to more than 20 per cent and business being badly affected.

"But because Dr Mahathir had the courage to take strong actions, he managed to pull the country out of its worst economic crisis since the independence," he said.

Dr Ling, however, said the country was not completely out of the crisis and that was why Dr Mahathir and the Barisan Nasional government should be retained with more than two-thirds majority.

He said it would be dangerous for voters to listen to DAP's argument that Dr Mahathir should continue as the Prime Minister but deny BN the two-thirds majority.

"DAP is trying to confuse everyone. You have only one vote and if you are not careful, we might have (Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk) Nik Aziz (Nik Mat) as the Prime Minister," he said.

Dr Ling also said from feedback received, the party stood a good chance to win in tough constituencies like Petaling Jaya Utara and Klang, adding that the party managed to win previously tough seats like Ipoh, Seremban, Pasir Pinji and Rasah.

Asked on opposition's claim that BN would lose Malay votes in the

coming election, Dr Ling said he believes that the community would continue to support Umno as the party could do a lot more for them.

-- BERNAMA

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