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MCA plans to field candidates

PETALING JAYA, Thurs. - The MCA plans to contest the forthcoming Sabah elections as the party is confident of getting full support from its 20,000 members in the State.

Its secretary-general Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh said tonight the existence of the Sabah Progressive Party and Liberal Democratic Party would not deter the MCA from contesting in the State.

On the contrary, he said the combination of these three parties could further strengthen Barisan Nasional.

"Maybe party A is strong in a particular area and party B is outstanding in another. So, the combination of these three parties will further strengthen the State Barisan Nasional," he said after officiating at the 13th anniversary of the Jee Gong Buddha at Kolej Bandar Utama.

Ting, who is also Housing and Local Government Minister, was earlier asked if the MCA would emulate Gerakan's decision in not contesting the Sabah elections.

At present, the MCA is represented in the State Assembly by Api Api State Assemblyman Datuk Chau Tet Onn. There are eight Chinese-majority constituencies in the State.

The other five BN component parties in the State are Umno, Parti Demokratik Sabah, Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah, Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat and MIC.

In welcoming Gerakan's decision not to contest the elections, State Barisan Nasional chairman and Chief Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok said: "The BN is thankful to component parties which will not be contesting the next elections as we have many parties in Sabah. Whoever decides not to contest is good news for us."

Ting said the MCA had yet to receive any indication on the number seats the party would be allocated.

"We will leave it to the Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) as the Barisan Nasional chairman to decide on the number of seats.

"Whether we are given one, two or three seats, or not given any at all, we will still give our support to the Barisan Nasional in the elections," he said.

On the party's elections to be held in July, Ting said it was too early to comment on whether there would be a contest.

"Party elections are secondary, the Sabah elections are more important," he said.

MCA members who wish to vie for positions in the MCA central committee can begin publicity or promotional campaigns now although nominations will only be on July 12.

Members are allowed to contest all party posts, including the president's post.

The branch elections have been scheduled for April 18 while the divisional elections will be on May 16 and the central committee elections on July 17.

The MCA general assembly will be held on July 17 and 18 in Kuala Lumpur. Briefings for all division and branch leaders will be on March 13.

The MCA has 838,000 members with 303,000, or 36 per cent, of them women.

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