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Ling-MCA

MCA TO MAKE COUNTER-PROPOSAL ON EXCO POSER

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 15 (Bernama) -- MCA has made a counter-proposal to the Pulau Pinang government on its original proposal for a deputy chief minister's post and an additional executive council seat which was rejected by the Barisan Nasional (BN) leadership, its president Datu Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said today.

Expressing the party members' disappointment over the rejection, Dr Ling said MCA would however continue to work with the state government although it was not awarded the extra posts it had been seeking.

Dr Ling, who did not elaborate on the counter-proposal, said that once a decision had been made on the matter, MCA would abide by it.

MCA's request for the extra seats was made because the party had performed "very well" during the general election where it won all the nine state seats contested in the state, he told reporters at his office here.

He was responding to the announcement made earlier today in Pulau Pinang by Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon that the BN leadership had rejected MCA's bid for a deputy chief minister's and exco posts.

The party's request for the extra posts had delayed the appointment of the state exco line-up and prompted a meeting between Koh and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Tuesday to resolve what some newspapers have described as a crisis.

MCA was reported to have "threatened" to pull out from the state government if its request for the extra posts was rejected.

The state exco line-up was announced today, making Pulau Pinang the last of the states to do so following the Nov 29 general election when the BN was returned to power.

In the line-up, the four BN component parties in the state retained their status quo, with Gerakan getting four posts including the Chief Minister's, Umno four, MCA two and one post for the MIC.

MCA has been lobbying for an additional deputy chief minister's to the one traditionally held by Umno. Datuk Dr Hilmi Yahaya of Umno was today named as the deputy chief minister.

" The counter-proposal by MCA is not important. What is important is that the Pulau Pinang MCA fulfills its responsibility to serve the people who have given them a stronger mandate this time," Dr Ling said.

" The MCA realises the stronger mandate this time and will work within the state government to serve the people," he added.

Asked if the party was disappointed with the decision, he said: " The members may feel disappointed because they did very well in the election and have a higher expectation."

When asked if the political developments in the state had affected its relationship with Gerakan, Dr Ling replied: " If you have maturity and adopt a give-and-take stance, you can overcome such problems."

Dr Ling was earlier reported to have admitted that the relationship between the two BN component parties was strained.

Earlier in Pulau Pinang, state MCA chief Datuk Dr Sak Cheng Lum described the BN leadership's decision to reject MCA's request as "unfair".

He said it was even more disappointing because the request had been misinterpreted, adding that the BN leadership was sending a conflicting signal by giving Gerakan an additional parliamentary secretary's post at the federal level while rejecting the MCA proposal in the state.

" What is the message that the BN leadership is trying to send to the

state MCA. I honestly don't understand and wish to state here that the BN leadership has been unfair to the members and supporters of MCA in Pulau Pinang," said Dr Sak, who was not retained as an exco in the new line-up, a post he held previously.

Dr Sak said he had personally asked not to be appointed to the exco, and told reporters: " It's up to you to speculate over my move".

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