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MCA-Unity

DELEGATES TO ENDORSE UNITY AT 47TH MCA ASSEMBLY

By: Abdul Rahman Ahmad

KUALA LUMPUR, June 15 (Bernama) -- MCA, the country's second largest political party, will hold its annual general assembly for two days from tomorrow against a backdrop of "clash of opinions at the top".

The assembly will kick off tomorrow with the one-day Youth and Wanita meetings followed by the opening of the 47th MCA general assembly on Saturday by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also Barisan Nasional (BN) chairman.

Judging from the mood of the delegates, they are expected to send a strong and clear message to their leaders to forget any differences and give priority to unity to ensure the party remains intact.

Amidst talk of differences of opinion among top party leaders, it was feared that the situation might be aggravated and eventually rock the party, according to one delegate who declined to give his name.

"The delegates will make a strong endorsement on maintaining unity among members and leaders," he said referring to the so-called rift between MCA supremo Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and deputy president Datuk Lim Ah Lek.

If education and economic matters took centre stage at previous assemblies, this time around the delegates were going to make a clarion call to leaders to set aside differences and place party unity above everything else, the delegate said.

He said that when Dr Ling announced his resignation as Transport Minister, it sent shockwaves not only through the party but also stunned the nation.

Dr Ling announced his resignation on May 22 but retracted it on June 6 after returning from an overseas vacation which was meant for him to think over his quit move.

"It (his decision) gave an indication that disunity was brewing among party leaders," the delegate said, adding that the Ling-Lim clash of opinions was an open secret.

MCA secretary-general Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh said he expected the subject of unity to be raised at the assembly which will be attended by some 2,400 delegates.

Dr Ting said the MCA headquarters had received many resolutions, including on the importance of party unity and team work to enable the party to serve the people better.

"The MCA AGM could be a platform for the delegates to help solve whatever differences facing party leaders," he told Bernama in an interview here.

He said despite differences of opinion among leaders, there was still unity in the party.

"It must be maintained as this is more important than leaders, who come and go.

"Whatever problems we have, I believe we can solve them within the party, especially if leaders themselves are willing to talk things over in the interest of the party above self-interest," he said.

He also believed party leaders were ready and willing to explain to delegates the recent developments in the party.

According to him, delegates are mature enough to raise whatever they feel is in the interest of the party.

"We cannot stop them from talking whatever they want as they are the

ones who elect leaders, and they are the ones who decide who should lead the party," he said dismissing rumours that delegates have been advised not to raise the matter (Dr Ling's intended resignation) at the meeting.

He also took the opposition to task for alleging that the recent episode within the party would break the BN coalition.

Dr Ting said education would continue to be given priority as delegates felt that this was one way to increase the level of education in the country.

He said delegates would debate the need to provide more Chinese schools in predominantly Chinese housing areas and the problem of shortage of Chinese school teachers.

Delegates are also expected to debate on economic issues, including the implementation of privatisation of government projects.

"We have received many requests on the need to oversee the privatisation of government projects which they feel should be more transparent," he said.

Besides urging the Chinese to be ready to meet the challenges within and outside the country, the delegates would also call on the community to continue supporting Dr Mahathir's leadership following his success in steering Malaysia out of the economic crisis, he added.

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