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PM agreed to give posts to MCA `months ago'

BUTTERWORTH, Sat. - The decision to offer Penang MCA the posts of State Legislative Assembly Deputy Speaker and Penang Port Commission chairman was agreed to by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad immediately after the last general election.

"The Prime Minister had decided on this a few months ago," MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Long Sik said today.

"We had requested greater representation following the party's and Barisan Nasional's success in the last general election ... we are happy with the decision made by the Barisan Nasional leadership," he said.

Dr Ling said this to reporters after opening the Penang MCA delegates' conference attended by about 400 delegates.

Also present were MCA deputy president Datuk Lim Ah Lek and State MCA chairman Datuk Dr Sak Cheng Lum.

Dr Ling, who is also Transport Minister, was asked to comment on the Penang MCA's readiness to accept the two key positions.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon was quoted in several Chinese newspaper reports as saying that the Barisan Nasional leadership had agreed with his (Koh's) proposal that the posts be given to MCA.

Asked to comment on this, Dr Ling said:

"The Prime Minister had offered us the posts and we have accepted them."

"It is an old story," he said, "The final decision (on the two posts) had already been made.

"My advice to MCA members is that they should not argue with people who won't accept if they are wrong.

"These people are kiasu," he said.

Asked when the MCA would fill the two posts, Dr Ling said: "ASAP (as soon as possible)."

On the candidates, he said Dr Sak would submit the names to him soon.

The Deputy Speaker's post is a new one while the Penang Port Commission chairmanship is now held by former State Gerakan chairman Datuk Tan Gim Hwa.

In the general election, Penang MCA won all nine State seats it contested.

It had also requested, among other things, a second Deputy Chief Minister's post and an additional Exco seat, but was turned down.

The Penang MCA now has the largest number of seats in the State Legislative Assembly following the defection of two Gerakan State assemblymen - Lim Boo Chang (Datuk Keramat) and Lim Chien Aun (Bayan Lepas) - to the party.

Gerakan has eight State seats, Umno has 10, and MIC has one.

The DAP, Parti Keadilan Nasional and Pas each has one seat in the 33-seat State Legislative Assembly.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Ling praised Penang MCA members for their efforts in garnering greater support from the people to ensure victory for the State Barisan Nasional.

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