

Dr M's advice timely: MCA leaders

'Party must consolidate and work hard to win back Chinese support'

MCA deputy president Datuk Lim Ah Lek said all MCA leaders agree with the prime minister's advice for the party to resolve its internal problems immediately to ensure it remains strong for the sake of Barisan Nasional and the country.

He said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's speech provided the right advice at the right time as the party needs to strengthen itself, work hard and consolidate to regain the Chinese community's support in the next general election.

"MCA is the backbone of BN and it cannot be weakened as it will affect BN," he told reporters when asked to respond to Mahathir's opening speech at the MCA's 48th annual general assembly.

MCA Youth chief Datuk Ong Tee Keat said concerted effort is needed by all to consolidate the party and doing so is more important than anything else.

"The party should be accommodative enough to allow for differing views and not let tempers flare in the midst of deliberation."

Vice-president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting said he agrees with Mahathir's advice as it sends a message to all MCA members that it is important for them to settle differences in a constructive, mature manner.

"What is important is to always discuss our problems within the party and try to achieve a consensus. Members should not make statements in public as it will create more misunderstandings.

"I think that from now, we should work towards settling our differences within the party."

Vice-president Datuk Chan Kong Choy said unity and stability in the party can be achieved if all party members heed the prime minister's advice and work towards strengthening the party by setting aside personal interest and feelings.

Secretary-general Datuk Seri Dr Ting Chew Peh said there is no point in denying that there are problems plaguing the party and that these issues have to be resolved in a democ-

cratic manner.

"We are an important component party in BN, so it is our duty as MCA leaders to ensure that the party is strong, and to be strong we need to be united.

"I am sure we can resolve our problems although the scars will take some time to heal."

Ting said all the problems should be settled before the next general election to ensure the party has the support of the people.

Wanita chief Datuk Dr Ng Yen Yen said: "The prime minister spoke like a father to a big family and he stressed the importance of MCA in BN."

Vice-president Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn described the advice as "appropriate and wise" and said the party accepts that it needs to strengthen itself.

He said the party has to work to strengthen unity and continue implementing its various social programmes to ensure it has the Chinese community's support.

MIC president Datuk Seri S.

Samy Vellu said the advice stresses on the importance of unity and that the party is more important to the country than individual member's interest.

"Somebody has to create understanding and I think the prime minister has done this very well."

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said Mahathir gave his advice as a "big brother" who oversees all other BN component parties.

"What he said is very true. We all have gone through our problems, and as BN component parties, we don't enjoy seeing others suffer."

Lim said he hopes that MCA will solve its problems as soon as possible because if its image suffers, the other component parties will also be dragged down.

He said he does not view MCA as a rival.

"I wish MCA well and hope it will resolve its problems responsibly and play its part as an important BN component party to maintain the image and strength of the coalition."