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Ah Lek-MCA

AH LEK "YES" TO CONSOLIDATION, URGES LING TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE

By: E.Sivabalan

KUALA LUMPUR, June 26 (Bernama) -- MCA deputy president Datuk Lim Ah Lek said today he agreed with the Prime Minister's call for MCA members to consolidate and suggested that party president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik make the first move.

"(But) there must be sincerity on his (Ling's) part to consolidate," Lim told Bernama when asked who should be the first to make the move in order to consolidate the party.

Lim was commenting on Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement yesterday, urging MCA members to consolidate as the issue over the purchase of Nanyang Press Holdings Bhd by the party's investment arm, Huaren Holdings Sdn Bhd, has been settled.

The former Human Resources Minister said: "If there is any effort, it must be in the interest of the party, community and the nation...there must be sincerity."

The Nanyang deal turned into a controversy drawing criticisms from many Chinese groups as well as from within the MCA itself.

Lim and vice-presidents Datuk Chua Jui Meng and Datuk Chan Kong Choy were the most notable critics of the deal and were among the eight Central Committee (CC) members who voted against the takeover at last month's CC meeting.

The remaining 32 CC members voted in favour of it.

Nanyang Press Holdings publishes the vernacular newspapers Nanyang Siang Pau and China Press.

The dissenting group in the MCA then proceeded with roadshows to explain to party members the implications of the transaction, which further divided the party.

The issue was settled last Sunday at the MCA extraordinary general meeting (EGM) when a total of 1,176 delegates or 53.3 per cent of the 2,216 delegates present, voted in favour of the deal while 1,019 or 46.2 per cent, opposed it. There were 12 spoilt votes and nine abstentions.

Lim said he had always been a strong believer in party unity. "I have always said this."

He urged party members after last Sunday's results to consolidate. However, he stressed that any effort by the party leadership to consolidate "must be relevant in the eyes of the Chinese community."

Lim said the issue was "more of differences in opinion" and nothing more.

"We are dealing with a particular issue (the Nanyang takeover). Since the delegates have decided, we should respect their decision," he said.

While congratulating those who had won and thanking those who supported Lim's cause (in opposing the deal), the MCA deputy president said what was important now is for the party to work together with the Chinese community so that they will continue to support the MCA.

"We have to consolidate and work together for the Chinese community because the next general election is not that far away. We need the support of the Chinese community," he said.

On Dr Mahathir's statement that Dr Ling would not take revenge on people who did not support him in the Nanyang takeover, Lim said he thanked the Prime Minister for making the remark.

"Any action that is not in the interest of the party (or) any action by the party president (against those who opposed the deal) will definitely

cause a split (in the party)," he said.

Lim said the party cannot afford to have any more controversies.

"We have too much problems in the MCA (now) and Nanyang (issue) could have been avoided," he said.

Lim said some people would or have blamed him for some of the problems in the MCA.

Stressing that this was not true, Lim said sometimes allegations were made against him and he had to defend himself to protect his integrity.

"I never start those things. Sometimes I am blamed for things I did not do, so I have to protect my integrity by telling the truth. The truth always hurt.

"There are certain things I can tolerate but sometimes, it's (allegations) just too much and I have to come out to explain (the truth)," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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