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Ah Lek: Make Chua Johor deputy chief

Chow Kum Hor

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong should have appointed vice-president Datuk Chua Jui Meng the party's Johor deputy chairman to show that he was magnanimous and not out for revenge.

Deputy president Datuk Lim Ah Lek said such an arrangement would pacify both Kedah members who wanted a local to lead them and Chua who wanted to return to his home State.

"Since there was a vacancy for the post of Johor deputy chairman created by Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting, Chua could have filled it," Lim told the New Straits Times.

Dr Ling said on Tuesday that Ong, who is also a vice-president, had asked to be dropped as the Johor deputy chairman due to governmental and party commitments. Replacing Ong is Johor Executive Councillor Datuk Chua Soi Lek.

The party president also replaced Chua as the Kedah MCA chairman with former State MCA secretary Datuk Beh Heng Seong.

The move, Dr Ling said, was to heed the wishes of Kedah MCA members who wanted a local to lead them. Chua, the Bakri MP, is from Johor while Beh is from Sungai Petani.

Lim said that replacing Ong with Chua would have been a "golden opportunity" for the president to mend the rift in the party since Ong wanted to be dropped from the Johor line-up on his own free will.

"If Chua were appointed deputy chairman, any suspicion that Dr Ling wanted to get rid of him would be eradicated," he said.

Asked why Dr Ling did not appoint Chua as the Johor deputy chairman, Lim said the president probably felt threatened by Chua who is the Health Minister.

Chua was one of the eight central committee members who opposed the party's acrimonious acquisition of Nanyang Press Holdings Bhd in May.

Lim advised Dr Ling to pay heed to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's advice that leaders of Barisan Nasional component parties should ensure stability in their respective parties.

Lim said Dr Mahathir gave this advice at Friday's Barisan Nasional supreme council meeting.

Dr Ling, Lim and MCA secretary-general Datuk Seri Dr Ting Chew Peh represented the party at the meeting.

"Dr Mahathir cited his experience when he was challenged by rivals within the party in 1987.

"The dissenting faction lost and left to form Semangat 46, but was later accepted back into the Umno fold. Some of them are now Ministers. I think Dr Ling should learn from this," Lim said.