

09 FEB 2001

Ling-Reshuffle

REPORTS ABOUT MCA LEADERS RESHUFFLE IN GOVT BASELESS- DR LING

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 9 (Bernama) -- MCA President Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said today news reports about a Cabinet reshuffle involving Ministers from the MCA are totally baseless rumours.

"As MCA President, I wish to clarify that these are rumours without any basis whatsoever," he told reporters here.

Dr Ling, who is Transport Minister, said this when asked to comment on news reports today that the MCA would make several "drastic" changes involving its Ministers and Deputy Ministers in the Government lineup.

He was speaking to reporters after receiving the Minister of Economic Affairs, Transport and Technology of Germany's Bavaria State, Dr Otto Weisheu, at his office here.

"We (MCA) do not have any wish to make such changes," he said.

He said all Ministers from the MCA had played a vital role and they were efficient leaders who had discharged their duties well.

Among those reportedly involved are two MCA Vice Presidents -- Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng and Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Chan Kong Choy.

According to the reports Chan would replace Chua as Health Minister.

Asked whether the rumours were deliberately spread by certain groups to destabilise the MCA or by others who wanted to go up higher, Dr Ling said, "I don't think so, I think someone mischievous... one naughty journalist...., that's all. It came from the newspapers...., it didn't come from anybody else."

On the contention that only the Prime Minister would know of any Cabinet reshuffle involving MCA Ministers, Dr Ling said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would usually discuss it with him.

"Technically, the Prime Minister need not discuss changes with anybody including myself. However in view of the good relations between the MCA and Umno and Dr Mahathir and myself...I believe the Prime Minister will not make any changes without discussing it (with me)."

"Just simply talking... to me it is an unfounded rumour with no basis at all," he said.

Meanwhile Penang MCA Chairman Datuk Dr Sak Cheng Lum has denied a report in an English language daily that he would resign his party post next week.

The report in the newspaper which quoted unnamed sources is baseless, he said.

"Such rumours about me are not new....since 1990 they have been saying I am resigning but the rumours have remained baseless," he told Bernama.

The question of vacating the post of State MCA Chairman did not arise as it was an appointment from MCA headquarters and so long "as my services are needed, I will continue to serve."

The newspaper had said that Dr Sak would resign his post and that an official announcement to this effect would be made at the MCA Central Committee meeting in Johor Baharu next week.

The report also claimed that MCA President Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik had accepted Sak's resignation.

Dr Sak, who is the assemblyman for Bagan, resigned as a State Executive Councillor only a few weeks after holding the post.

He was said to have done this to express dissatisfaction over the rejection of the MCA's request for a Deputy Chief Minister's post even

though it held the most number of seats in the Penang State Legislative Assembly.

Dr Sak was surprised that others were acting as spokesman for him even though he was still able to speak even if it was about his retirement.

"I will of course retire from the post one day but for the present my services are still needed by the MCA and I will carry out my duties and live up to the trust placed in me," he said.

Meanwhile Penang MCA Deputy Chairman Wong Kam Hoong, who was reported to be Dr Sak's successor, also denied the news report.

"I was shocked by the report for as far as I know, Dr Sak had never expressed a desire to retire and we two have always worked closely," he said.

Wong said he contacted Dr Sak this morning and was relieved when he said it was a fabrication by certain groups and that such a statement did not come from him.

-- BERNAMA

AZE AAM