

# PM to meet MCA factions

Not 13 APR 2002

## Dr M: Both-sides can resolve differences through negotiation

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KOTA BARU, Fri. — Barisan National chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad plans to meet the two MCA factions "anytime soon" to work out an amicable settlement to their dispute.

He said there were better ways to resolve the dispute than Team B's plan to proceed with the extraordinary general meeting on April 21.

The Prime Minister said the differences like the one in MCA would not benefit any quarter.

"I believe both sides can resolve this through negotiation. We should minimise confrontation," he added.

In Kuala Lumpur, Patrick Senyah and Chow Kum Hor report that MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, who leads Team A, and his deputy Datuk Lim Ah Lek, who is Team B leader, have welcomed the meeting with Dr Mahathir.

Both expressed confidence that Dr Mahathir knows what is best for the BN.

Both leaders said they were confident of a positive outcome with Dr Mahathir's intervention.

Dr Ling said he regarded the Prime Minister as a fatherly figure in the BN family and was willing to listen to any advice he had to offer.

"I know he is very concerned with developments in the MCA and I am confident he knows what is best for the BN," he said.

Lim said Dr Mahathir had surely realised that the factional problems were dragging on too long and it was time for a resolution.

"A weak MCA cannot assist and support the BN. And I am, confident Dr Mahathir will know how best the problem can be resolved amicably," he said.

Team B, which is dissatisfied with the final membership list as it claims that it contained thousands of phantom members, has called for the EGM.

Dr Ling has warned delegates that the EGM was unconstitutional. Lim has denied this, saying that it is being called according to proce

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dure.

Meanwhile, when asked about Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong's comment on the reclamation exercise, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had a strong basis when it sent a protest note to Singapore.

He said that Singapore would have to explain what it meant when it said that Malaysia's protest was baseless.

"From what I have gathered, (Singapore Senior Minister) Lee Kuan Yew in his letter only said my letter contained new things and they have to study the proposals that we made," he said.

It was reported today that Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said the republic had replied to Malaysia's latest proposal on the bilateral package of outstanding issues.

Goh was also reported to have said Singapore would address Malaysia's worries on the reclamation, but was unsure what the concerns were, whether it was water quality, fishermen's livelihood or boundary changes.

Dr Mahathir said he had not received the letter from Goh.

"To us, there is basis to our pro-

posal. We have made the proposal and are awaiting response. We have not received it yet.

"If they claim the proposals are baseless, we want to know why."

The Prime Minister was speaking after a meeting with civil servants from Federal departments and agencies based in Kelantan. He later met the State liaison committee.

Following the latter meeting, Ke-

lantani Umno chief Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said he was resigning as Umno information chief to enable him to concentrate on his role as the State chief.

Mustapa said he conveyed his intentions to Dr Mahathir today.

"Dr Mahathir agreed that I should concentrate on my work in Kelantan Umno as the party's priority is to win back the State from Pas," he said.

Mustapa, who was appointed the Umno information chief in June 2000, said the State Umno liaison committee had asked him to spend more time with Kelantan Umno, especially getting close to the grassroots.

"I feel I should give priority to Kelantan Umno as the State is a Pas stronghold," he said.

Mustapa also indicated that there will be changes to the State Umno committee line-up.

"We will be making some changes. However, I prefer to think carefully. I will inform everybody when the time comes," he said.

On Umno's chances to win back Kelantan, Mustapa said he did not want to boast, but the party "is giving Pas advance notice that it is preparing strategies and will be giving them a tough fight".