

# The point of no return

SUN 22 APR 2002

## An insult to PM's effort if MCA polls go on

**KUALA LUMPUR:** If the MCA divisions proceed with their elections, nomination for which is today, they are thumbing their noses at Rarisan Nasional chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's effort to resolve the feud between the party leaders, sources close to mediators said.

Team A faction led by party president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik disagreed with the memorandum of agreement drafted under Mahathir's instructions which includes that elections be called off.

Ling is expected to see the prime minister who returns from a visit to Morocco, Libya and Bahrain this morning to persuade him to change his mind over the question of divisional elections.

The other two points in the agreement were that the party leadership status quo remains and that the extraordinary general meeting called for by Team B, led by deputy president Datuk Lim Ah Lek, be called off.

The MCA president and two of his men had walked off in a huff without even looking at the memorandum during their meeting with mediators Tan Sri Lim Kok Wing and Tan Sri Lee Kim Yew chaired by BN deputy chairman Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at his residence.

When Lim and his men arrived, they signed the agreement even though they had assured Mahathir before he left for his trip abroad that they would abide by his memorandum which at

that time allowed the divisional polls to go on.

Ling and his men refused to accept the word of the mediators and Abdullah that the RN chairman had faxed instructions that the cancelling of the elections be part of the agreement a reversal of his earlier instruction after he was persuaded by one of the mediators, both of whom were nominated by Team A.

The feud among the MCA leaders broke into the open last year and split into what is now referred to as Team A and Team B over the question of the party membership list which Team B insists contains phantom members.

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### MCA row Where is the truth? pg3

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They had seen Mahathir, in his capacity as BN chairman, several times since last year to get his "fatherly advice and guidance" to help solve the problem that threatened to split the party.

When matters came to a head several weeks ago and in response to pleadings from other MCA leaders and leaders of the Chinese community, Mahathir decided to help resolve the problem, the sources said.

The factions agreed to abide by his principles in laying the framework for a settlement which would not see "winners taking all" and "losers losing all".

turn to PAGE 2

## Proxy fight at division polls

from FRONT PAGE

SUN 22 APR 2002

After the prime minister left for his trip last Monday, one of the mediators realised that by allowing divisional elections even though there was a freeze in the leadership positions at the top, the party fight would still continue by proxy at the divisions.

He argued in his fax to Mahathir that party unity would still suffer and the BN's determination to have a united and strong coalition to face the next general election would still suffer a setback.

The BN chairman responded by instructing him to tell Abdullah to tell the leaders of the factions of the change. The memorandum of agreement was changed accordingly