

Division elections put off

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KUALA LUMPUR: The MCA postponed divisional elections at the eleventh hour after Team A agreed to accept Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's peace and stability formula for the party.

Its president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik made the announcement after a "lengthy and broad discussions" with Mahathir and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in Putrajaya yesterday afternoon.

Also present at the hour-long meeting which started at 3.30pm were party vice-presidents Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting and Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn.

Ling said they came to a broad agreement on how to explain and implement the Barisan Nasional chairman's agenda for peace and stability.

"For the larger interest for peace and stability for MCA, I must emphasise that sacrifices have to be made," said Ling. He appealed to members to understand the steps that will be taken for this purpose.

Other details of the peace plan will be discussed during the Central Committee meeting at 11am today, he said.

He, however, stressed that according to the party constitution, the 166 divisions have until May 17 to hold the elections, three years after the last polls.

"Nominations for division elections (scheduled between 4-8pm yesterday) will be temporarily postponed and we will go to the ground to explain PM's agenda for peace and stability," he told a press conference at MCA headquarters.

He said new nomination and election dates will be announced later.

Asked if he is confident of finding a solution, he said: "We are going to do everything possible to achieve the peace and stability agenda and we expect to get the fullest cooperation from all quarters because we believe there will be a convergence of objectives."

Team A faction had earlier disagreed with the memorandum of agreement, drafted under Mahathir's instructions, which includes that elections be called off.

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

On Sunday, Ling said he will seek advice from Mahathir, who returned yesterday morning from a three-nation tour to Africa.