

No contest for all posts

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KUALA LUMPUR: The MCA yesterday announced that the status quo at all levels of the party leadership will be maintained as stipulated by the peace agenda initiated by Barisan Nasional chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Its president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the central committee (CC) made the unanimous decision to maintain the status quo at division, state and national levels "until 2005" in accordance with the peace and stability agenda.

"I want to appeal to all members to accept and support this agenda for peace and stability," Ling said after chairing the CC meeting.

Yesterday saw the feuding factions seated together at a press conference for the first time in almost a year, since the Nanyang takeover issue.

Since the split started, deputy president and Team B

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leader Datuk Lim Ah Lek and his faction rarely stayed back for the obligatory press conference and had many times spoke to the media separately.

"We want to thank the prime minister for his concern over our unity and we also agreed unanimously to work together to maintain peace and stability in the party," said Ling, who is transport minister.

He also announced that nominations for division elections, postponed from Monday, will now be held on May 10 and elections on May 14 and 15. All incumbents will be returned unopposed.

"The nominations and election process will be carried out as we are duty-bound to do so under the party constitution which stipulates party elections every three years," said Ling.

He said the status quo is something both factions have unanimously worked together to try to achieve and they will persuade members to support the plan for the sake of peace and stability of MCA, for the

interest of BN, the community and nation.

He said they will go to the ground to persuade and advise grassroots on the no-contest plan.

Ling also fielded several questions from reporters:

Will the status quo remain until the 2005 party elections?

"Yes. Whoever is there now, continues to lead for the next term. We want the status quo for the sake of peace, stability and unity. The peace and stability plan also hopes that we will have the status quo."

Will the status quo be retained for ministerial posts?

"That is the prerogative of the PM and it is not my prerogative."

Is the membership list, which Team B claims contains phantom members, no longer an "issue"?

"We have gone through branch elections and now we are moving into the divisional elections on the same list. We

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don't have to discuss that anymore."

Ling also said the Youth CC, whose powers were suspended, is still there except its functions have been taken over by the three-man committee.

When will the youth suspension be lifted?

"After the elections, it would have given birth to a new baby."

Can you work with Lim for the next three years?

"There is no permanent enemy and no permanent friends in politics. I believe we can have the convergence of views on most things."

Ling said the prime minister's plan is a good solution to minimise dispute and it will allow existing leaders to continue their work.

After the press conference, Ling and Lim shook hands and posed for the media.

Ling told Lim: "Thank you, Ah Lek . . . thank you very much."

Lim just smiled.