

CLEAR ROAD TO PEACE

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MCA leaders begin work to remove peace plan obstacles

By FOONG PEK YEE

KUALA LUMPUR: MCA leaders have started work to ensure the successful implementation of their party's peace agenda by removing obstacles that might upset the status quo agreed upon to allow incumbents at all levels to remain in their positions.

Leaders from Team A and Team B have been told to submit their recommendations to the MCA headquarters election steering committee.

MCA secretary-general Datuk Seri Dr Ting Chew Peh, who heads the committee, said the panel would meet on Tuesday to discuss the suggestions to iron out the problems before nomination day

for divisions on May 10.

The hitches include over-the-age-limit MCA Youth leaders, except the national Youth chairman, who are above 45 years old. Under the party constitution, there is no age limit for the national Youth chief.

Other problems include the positions of incumbent leaders at division, state and central level who were defeated in the recently concluded branch polls, and division leaders who have died.

The peace plan, initiated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, was unanimously approved by the MCA central committee on Tuesday.

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Ting: No force, but we'll urge all to keep status quo

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The implementation of the peace plan began with some advice from Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who appealed to MCA leaders to let bygones be bygones and to strive to fortify the party and Barisan Nasional.

Yesterday, Team A and Team B Youth leaders met and agreed to support amendments to the wing's bylaws to remove the age ceiling.

The proposal, when approved by the central committee, will allow eight Youth state chiefs to keep their posts.

The talks were attended by Youth secretary-general Yew Teong Look, vice-chairman Loh Seng Kok and Selangor Youth chief Datuk Ch'ng Toh Eng from Team A; and deputy secretary-general Liow Tiong Lai, legal bureau chief Simon Lim and vice-chairman Datuk Liew Yuen Keong from Team B.

Speaking at a press conference here yesterday, Dr Ting said the steering committee would submit the recommendations to the presidential council or central committee for a decision before May 10.

Asked what would happen if the grassroots refused to heed the no-contest advice, Dr Ting said party leaders would have to persuade and advise them to support the peace plan but there would be no coercion.

On Tuesday, party president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said MCA leaders at the division, state and national levels would remain in their posts until the next party elections in 2005.

The status quo is being maintained as part of the peace agenda to end the party leadership crisis.

Dr Ling had said that there would be no contest in MCA's 166 divisional elections on May 14-15. The same formula would be applied at state, Wanita, Youth and national levels.

Earlier in Putrajaya yesterday, Dr Ling said the three-man committee which took over from the suspended Youth central committee in December last year would meet leaders from the wing to discuss ways to implement the status quo formula.

He said he expected some recommendations in the next two days.