

# MCA to work on peace plan

STAR 30 APR 2002

## Party reps to meet on formula today

By FOONG PEK YEE

KUALA LUMPUR: MCA Members of Parliament and state assemblymen will meet today to work out the implementation of the party's peace plan to end the 14-month long crisis.

The 98 elected representatives will meet at the MCA headquarters to find ways to reconcile ahead of the division elections on May 14-15.

The meeting will be chaired by party president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik. His deputy, Datuk Lim Ah Lek is expected to attend.

Party officials said many grassroots members from the 166 divisions were unhappy with the "no contest" formula for the division polls.

They said while they did not mind a status quo at the nation-

al level, contests should be allowed at the division level.

"These *xiaolapu* or little bosses wield considerable influence at the grassroots level but the big bosses will have to convince them of the larger picture," said one Selangor leader.

The peace plan, initiated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, has been endorsed by the party's central committee.

A senior party leader said the initial grassroots reaction was expected because "the decision was too sudden and unexpected."

He said the "elections without contest" formula was not as drastic as it first appeared because at the last party polls in 1999, almost 90% of the branches and about 80% of the divisions saw no contests.

In fact, only the four vice-president's posts were contested after the 25 candidates for the central committee members, deputy president and president were returned unopposed.

Describing the plan as wholesome in a way, he said Dr Mahathir had taken into consideration several aspects - including respecting the party constitution, which called for the election of office bearers every three years.

"If the elections are postponed indefinitely, aspirants and their supporters will continue to campaign as they will have no idea when the elections would be called," he added.

Party sources said at least 90% of the 166 divisions would accept the no-contest formula, although there would be hitches in some areas.