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PM: Ah Lek not suitable to head panel again, but groups should have held

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said it would not be suitable to reappoint Datuk Lim Ah Lek as MCA disciplinary committee chairman as he is involved in the controversy affecting the party.

But at the same time, Dr Mahathir said there should have been consultations between the warring factions in the party on who should be appointed to the committee.

He said this after opening a conference on taxation at the Palace of the Golden Horses.

The Prime Minister made the remarks when asked on the decision of the MCA central committee on Aug 29 not to reappoint Lim as chairman of the party's disciplinary committee.

To a question that the decision to drop the deputy president from the committee went against the peace plan, Dr Mahathir said he did not wish to interfere in the party's internal problems.

But generally, he said, both sides had adhered to the plan.

In Putrajaya, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the removal of Lim and four others as disciplinary committee members was done without any illintention.

He denied the move was intended to punish the socalled Team B members headed by Lim.

"In fact, Team A members from the disciplinary committee have also been replaced," he said referring to Datuk Fong Chan Onn and Datuk Ng Yen Yen who were dropped together with Lim.

Dr Ling said this when asked whether Lim's removal would upset the peace plan brokered by the Prime Minister.

"On the contrary, the appointment of the new members will complement the peace plan."

He said the decision was taken by the central committee and "Lim is only one man in the committee".

"From grass roots' feedback, there had been dissatisfaction with the disciplinary committee headed by Lim. But they are happy with the appointment of five party veterans to the committee."

Dr Ling, who is also Transport Minister, met reporters after meeting seven harmonica players who had won international awards. They paid a courtesy call at the Transport Ministry here.

He said the five new members were party veterans who were impartial. "So when it comes to taking disciplinary action against any member, they will not be biased."

On the immediate task assigned to the disciplinary committee, he said its priority would be to draw up guidelines on the do's and don'ts.

"The guidelines should be clear in that any party disputes should be discussed and settled within the party and not brought to the Press, police or court."