

13 APR 2002

Mahathir-MCA

MCA PRESIDENT MEETS PRIME MINISTER TODAY ON MCA SQUABBLE

PUTRAJAYA, April 13 (Bernama) -- MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik met Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today over the problems facing the party which are threatening to split the Barisan Nasional's second largest component party.

He described as positive the hour-long meeting which started at the Prime Minister's office at 11.30am.

"Yes, I met with the Prime Minister this morning, it was a good meeting," he told Bernama when contacted. Dr Ling was accompanied by party vice-presidents Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting and Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn.

However, he declined to reveal whether the prime minister had offered any solution to resolve the long-standing problem.

Dr Mahathir, who is Barisan Nasional chairman, said yesterday that he would meet MCA leaders to help resolve differences between the two rival factions, dubbed Team A and Team B, led respectively by Dr Ling and his deputy, Datuk Lim Ah Lek.

Dr Mahathir had also said that he believed that Dr Ling and Lim could resolve their problems through negotiations.

The faction led by Lim has threatened to go ahead with an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) scheduled for April 21, which rejected by party secretary-general Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh, to resolve the issue of phantom members in the list of delegates to the party elections in June.

It also wants the party elections to be postponed for the membership list to be cleansed and verified.

Lim also said on Thursday that he and Dr Ling had had irreconcilable differences for a long time and had been putting up a show of unity in public.

Dr Ling, when asked whether the prime minister had offered any amicable solution to the problem, said Dr Mahathir told him to work towards the agenda of stability in the party, to which he agreed.

"I agreed to the agenda and I assured him that I would work very hard to achieve that agenda, that is the stability in the party," he said, adding that he could not reveal the agenda at the moment.

The problem plaguing the MCA surfaced last year when the party leadership decided to purchase Nanyang Press Holding Berhad which controls both Nanyang Siang Pao and China Press.

Meanwhile, Datuk Lim Ah Lek, when contacted, said he was still waiting for a call to meet the Prime Minister.

He said the prime minister was very concerned with the MCA problems and this was understandable because he did not want to see a weak MCA which would affect the BN's strength in the next general election due in 2004.

He said the MCA problems had dragged on long enough to prompt the prime minister to openly intervene.

"I think with his experience, the PM will be able to solve it once and for all and amicably," he said.

-- BERNAMA

AT ZS JK