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MCA Youth closes ranks for by-election

Chow Kum Hor

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The two opposing factions in MCA Youth have appeared to close ranks, at least until the Indera Kayangan by-election, as they expressed support for movement head Datuk Ong Tee Keat during campaigning.

They also accepted in good faith Ong's reason for not attending the party's inaugural meeting of the Indera Kayangan by-election task force tomorrow. The task force is headed by president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik.

MCA Youth deputy head Hoo Seong Chang said there was no reason to question Ong's sincerity in not attending the meeting as he had applied for leave earlier.

Yesterday, Ong's private secretary Tang Thien Ming said Ong would not be attending the meeting as he had gone to Hong Kong for a vacation.

Tang had also said that Ong only knew of his appointment as the vice-chairman in the task force through the newspapers yesterday.

Hoo said Ong had pledged to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that he would work hard to ensure victory in the Indera Kayangan by-election, scheduled on Jan 19.

All members should support party leaders, including Ong, during campaigning, Hoo added.

"Now is not the time to talk about Team A and Team B. We must put aside our differences to ensure victory," said Hoo who is also the Kluang MP.

Terengganu MCA Youth head Toh Chin Yaw said Ong's acceptance of his appointment into the task force was proof that Ong supported the party.

Toh added that Terengganu Youth would send a delegation to Indera Kayangan to help out in the campaigning.

"I think Ong made the right decision by accepting the appointment. It is now time to work for a victory in Indera Kayangan," he added.

Prior to this, Hoo and Toh were in Team A while Ong in Team B - two factions in the party that were on collision course over issues like the Nanyang takeover and the suspension of the Youth central committee.

The animosity between the two camps was so tense that delegates to last year's Aug 3 general assembly threw chairs, stink bombs and acted in a rowdy manner.

Meanwhile, Youth deputy secretary-general Liow Tiong Lai said Ong had started doing the groundwork in Indera Kayangan even before the task force was formed.

"He had gone to the constituency twice to gather feedback on the ground and lay out strategies to counter the Opposition," said Liow who is also Bentong MP.

Liow added that he was confident Ong would work under Dr Ling during the campaign.

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