

20/04/2002

MCA's Team B calls off EGM (HL)

Patrick Sennyah; Chow Kum Hor

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - MCA's Team B has called off its proposed Extraordinary General Meeting scheduled for Sunday but Team A is adamant to proceed with the divisional elections as scheduled.

The calling-off of the EGM and re-scheduling of the divisional elections were two of the three points outlined in the agenda of peace being worked out by the mediators in the MCA conflict.

The other was that the status quo is retained at all party levels.

Sources revealed that in a meeting last night, the mediators, working on the advice of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, proposed to the rival MCA camps the three-point agenda.

They said Team B agreed to all the three points but Team A did not agree to the calling-off of the divisional elections which in effect negated the call to retain the status quo at all party levels.

The meeting was held at the residence of Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who was present.

Others present were mediators Tan Sri Lim Kok Wing and Tan Sri Lee Kim Yew, and political secretaries to the Prime Minister Datuk Johari Baharum and Matthias Chang.

Team A was represented by party president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, vice-presidents Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn and Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting while Team B had deputy president Datuk Lim Ah Lek, vice-presidents Datuk Chua Jui Meng and Datuk Chan Kong Choy and central committee member Datuk Fu Ah Kiow.

The agenda of peace was the culmination of efforts to resolve the protracted conflict between the two camps.

It came after a series of requests made over a year by both Team A and Team B leaders to Dr Mahathir and Abdullah, as the Barisan Nasional chairman and deputy chairman respectively, to step in and solve the conflict.

At a Press conference held this afternoon, Lim said Dr Mahathir had advised them to call off the party elections from divisional levels onwards.

"We have agreed to this. However, the scheduled divisional and State meetings and the general assemblies will proceed as usual, but without elections," he said.

However, MCA elections steering committee chairman Datuk Seri Dr Ting Chew Peh, who is aligned to Team A, remained adamant that the party polls at all levels proceed as scheduled.

"It was the central committee which fixed the dates of the elections. Since 1987 until now, the divisional elections have never been postponed," said Ting who is also the party secretary-general.

When pointed out that the proposal to re-schedule the MCA elections was believed to have come from Dr Mahathir, Ting said he was not aware of it and refused further comment.

Dr Ling, when contacted declined comment, saying:

"On these issues, I leave it to Ting, who is the party secretary-general and also chairman of the steering committee."

On whether the elections would be re-scheduled if next Tuesday's emergency central committee meeting decided to postpone the polls, Ting refused to speculate.

Ting said the central committee meeting was scheduled before today's

announcement by Team B that the elections would be postponed.

Asked to confirm rumours that he would step down as secretary-general if the elections were re-scheduled, Ting said:

"It has never crossed my mind.

"I am still the secretary-general and doing my job until today."

Speculations had been rife over the last few days that Ting would resign if the party elections were postponed.

Lim, on his part, said:

"By calling off the EGM, we have shown our commitment to the peace and unity process. As such, all divisions should not proceed with nominations scheduled for April 22."

To do otherwise, Lim said, would be going against Dr Mahathir's advice for unity.

"With this settled, the party will have a new resolve to forge ahead in the spirit of Indera Kayangan and Ketari so as to ensure continued support of the Chinese community for the BN and the Government," he added.

Also present at today's Press conference were Chua, Chan, Wanita deputy head Datin Paduka Dr Tan Yee Kew, Youth head Datuk Ong Tee Keat, central committee members Fu, Datuk Tang See Hang, Datuk Dr Yeow Chai Thiam and Datuk Wong Mook Leong and Serdang MP Datuk Yap Pian Hon.

Lim said he, Chua and Chan had a series of meetings with Dr Mahathir and Abdullah.

"There was a memorandum on Dr Mahathir's agenda for peace and stability which was presented to us and which we were asked to sign if we agree, and we (Team B) signed it yesterday," he said.

Asked if Team A had also signed the memorandum, Lim said: "Do not ask me about them (Team A). As far as we are concerned, from now on, there is no such thing as Team A and B," he said.

At this point, Lim referred to a Page 1 report in the New Straits Times on April 14, entitled "Ling: Dr M's agenda for peace is very good" in which, Dr Ling, after having met Dr Mahathir was quoted as saying that Dr Mahathir had presented him (Dr Ling) with "a very good agenda for peace and stability".

Dr Ling had said he agreed with the agenda and promised to work hard to achieve it.

"Dr Ling made this statement after meeting the Prime Minister.

"On our part, we have signed the memorandum and from now will work hard to ensure greater victory in the coming general election," said Lim.

Lim said they had informed all members of their decision to call off the EGM and they were happy to adhere to the wishes of the Prime Minister.

Asked what action they would take if there were divisions which proceeded with nominations on April 22, he said: "We will know what to do."

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi when approached by reporters in Teluk Intan, Perak declined to comment.

"Leave everything to the Prime Minister," he said.

(END)