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Reaction mixed to Ah Lek's suggestion

Chow Kum Hor

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - There was mixed reaction from MCA leaders to the proposal that president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik comes up with the schedule for his retirement and when his successor would take over.

Yesterday, deputy president Datuk Lim Ah Lek had, after opening the 39th MCA Youth annual general assembly, suggested that Dr Ling take the cue from Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who announced he would step down as Prime Minister and Umno president in October next year and that his successor would be Datuk Seri Ahmad Abdullah Badawi.

Lim said that himself was prepared to vacate his party post.

Central committee member Senator Yew Teong Look said if Lim wanted to leave, no one was stopping him and he (Lim) should not set conditions for Dr Ling.

"Ah Lek has been saying that he wanted to leave since he was a State Exco member in Pahang more than 10 years ago. But today, he is still here," said Yew, the former MCA Youth secretary-general.

Yew also called on Lim not to speak on behalf of Barisan Nasional component parties as the leaders in each party knew what to do.

He said members should have confidence in the party leadership to draw up a succession plan and that it need not be made public.

Serdang division chairman Datuk Yap Pian Hon welcomed Lim's proposal as it would allow a smooth transition of powers in the party.

"A smooth succession is crucial to ensure the party does not face another leadership crisis. MCA needs to be united to face the next general election," said the Serdang MP.

He added that the party's top leaders should be elected by the general assembly, although under the constitution, the central committee could elect from among themselves to fill any vacancies in the committee.

Yap said the membership list should be cleaned up before the general assembly elects the office-bearers.

Subang division chairman Datuk Lee Hwa Beng said although he supported a smooth transition of power, any vacancy in the central committee should be filled by the committee itself.

Meanwhile, Dr Ling, when contacted, declined to comment on Lim's statement.

He said last week that he would make public when the time came for him to step down.

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