

17 MAY 2003

Ling-MCA

DR LING DECLINES COMMENT ON TALKS TO REACTIVATE PEACE PLAN

KAMPAR, Perak, May 17 (Bernama) -- MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik today declined comment on speculation that rival factions in his party have been meeting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad over the past few days.

Dr Ling was also non-committal when asked if negotiations were underway to reactivate the "Peace and Stability Agenda" forwarded by Dr Mahathir and accepted by the party last year.

"I don't want to comment at this moment," he said when asked if he and MCA Deputy President Datuk Lim Ah Lek had met Dr Mahathir separately this week.

Dr Ling said that if there was anything positive, he would contribute towards it but there was nothing yet.

"If there is anything positive, we will do anything to help and contribute. We will participate constructively but right now there is nothing," he said after overseeing preparations for the official opening of the Tunku Abdul Rahman College Kampar branch campus by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi tomorrow.

Dr Ling said lots of rumours and speculations in the past had been proven wrong.

"I had been hearing all these rumours for the past few years. It had always been proven wrong," he added.

Dr Mahathir, who is Barisan Nasional Chairman, came up with the plan last year after a protracted dispute between two camps in the MCA had threatened to split the party, the second biggest in the 14-member Barisan Nasional.

Both the "Team A", headed by Dr Ling and "Team B" under Lim, had agreed that the party elections last year proceed but without any contest which saw incumbents from divisional to national levels returned for another three-year term, until 2005.

Following that, Lim had announced on Jun 28 last year that he was willing to resign from all party posts provided the MCA leadership drew up a comprehensive leadership succession plan.

However, the peace plan could not solve the internal dispute due to several issues, mainly over the question of successors to the two top leaders.

On Jan 6 this year, Lim had said that he would challenge Dr Ling for the presidency if the latter was still around in 2005.

Dr Ling, on the other hand, had said that he had no plans to resign as his term expired only in 2005.

The Transport Minister had earlier this year announced that he submitted his resignation from the Cabinet to the Prime Minister in August last year.

Meanwhile, in KUALA LUMPUR, there was much speculation among party members over the reactivation of plan and changes in the leadership due to the fact that the party's decision making body, the Central Committee (CC), would convene a meeting on Friday.

According to sources, the CC meeting on May 23 at the Wisma MCA at noon was expected to discuss the matter relating to the party leadership and to announce an "important decision".

"Speculation is rife," said a source who declined to be identified.

Under the MCA constitution, any changes in the party leadership must be

decided by the Central Committee, which can also decide leave it to the delegates to decide by holding an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM).

-- BERNAMA

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