

20 MAY 2003

Ling-MCA

DR LING TOLD PERAK MCA DIVISIONS HE'S LIKELY TO RESIGN - ONG

IPOH, May 20 (Bernama) -- MCA President Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik indicated to the Perak MCA delegation, which called on him today, that he would probably resign in the next few days, State MCA chief Datuk Ong Ka Chuan said.

He said Dr Ling gave the hint to 18 of the 23 division chiefs from the state who met him at his ministry in Putrajaya.

"He didn't say directly but strongly indicated that he is going to resign. We asked him to reconsider but Dr Ling said he had more or less made up his mind," he told BERNAMA when contacted.

Dr Ling, who is Transport Minister, however, did not say whether he was giving up his ministerial post or the MCA presidency or both.

Ong said Dr Ling, who had been at the helm for the past 16 years, told them that "some important developments" would take place at the party's emergency Central Committee (CC) meeting on Friday in Kuala Lumpur.

On Saturday, Dr Ling declined to comment on speculations that the peace plan brokered by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last year, which was to resolve the internal crisis between two factions in the MCA, namely Team A and Team B, had resumed.

He had also refused to comment when asked whether he and his deputy Datuk Seri Lim Ah Lek had met Dr Mahathir, who is the Barisan Nasional (BN) Chairman, last week.

The MCA President, however, said he was prepared to participate and contribute to any peace plan that would be good for everyone.

On May 23, 2000, Dr Ling made a surprised announcement that he had resigned as the Transport Minister but withdrew it two weeks later after being persuaded by party members to stay on.

Earlier this year, Dr Ling had announced that he had sent an undated resignation letter to the Prime Minister in August last year.

Under the peace plan, Team A headed by Dr Ling and Team B by Lim had agreed that the party election last year proceed without any contest.

This saw the incumbents at division and national levels being re-elected for another three-year term until 2005.

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

Ong said Dr Ling told the delegation that it was time for younger leaders to take over the leadership but did not disclose any details or whether the decision was made following the peace talk.

"Dr Ling said it was his own decision. Nobody made or influenced his decision...it was purely his," he said.

Ong said the Perak MCA pleaded with Dr Ling to continue leading the party until his term expired in 2005 as his leadership was still needed and the timing was not right, especially with the general election expected to be held before the Parliament term expires next year.

"But in his speech, Dr Ling said he wanted to give way for the younger leaders to take over. Dr Ling said he had done everything possible for the party and Chinese community and was sincere in making the decision," he said.

He said Dr Ling cited the establishment of Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), which started operations last year, as his biggest achievement.

Ong said he arranged for the meeting after many grassroots members

queried him about the speculations that Dr Ling would be resigning.

"It's very difficult for me to explain the real situation. So, I felt it is best that they meet and ask our president themselves," he said.

Ong said the state leaders were hoping that Dr Ling would change his mind and stay on until 2005 although the president seemed to be sticking to his decision.

He said Dr Ling was instrumental in consolidating the Perak MCA after he took over the state leadership in 1995, helping the party to win 13 state and seven parliamentary seats in the 1995 general election, compared to just three state and three parliamentary seats in the 1985 and 1990 general elections.

-- BERNAMA

AR TS