

22 MAY 2003

DR LING'S RESIGNATION WILL MEND TIES IN MCA, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, May 22 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he believes that Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik's resignation as MCA president will improve the situation in the party and mend ties between the two squabbling factions.

The party faces a leadership crisis, dragging over 14 months, with the two factions -- Team A of Dr Ling's supporters versus Team B of party members supporting deputy president Datuk Seri Lim Ah Lek -- pitched against each other.

Speaking to reporters after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting, Dr Mahathir said Dr Ling, however, had not informed him officially of his latest move to resign.

"I know about it through media report," said the Umno president, who is also Barisan Nasional (BN) chairman.

To a question on whether the Cabinet agrees to Dr Ling's resignation, the prime minister said that it was left to the MCA to decide and not the Cabinet.

To suggestions that the MCA could still be split despite Dr Ling's resignation from the top post, Dr Mahathir said: "We don't encourage factions. The BN does not accept two factions in MCA. We accept only MCA."

When asked on Dr Ling's future in the Cabinet, the prime minister said he would decide on this later.

-- BERNAMA

HK MFJ JK