

01 JUN 2003

Abdullah-MCA

FOCUS ON RESTORING PARTY UNITY, ABDULLAH TELLS NEW MCA LEADERS

KUALA LUMPUR, June 1 (Bernama) -- The new MCA leadership should give priority to restoring unity within the party and to resolving any problems that might still exist, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

The deputy prime minister hoped that the new leaders could prove themselves by strengthening the second largest component party of the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN).

"They should promote understanding, that is important. Whatever misunderstanding and dispute (in the party) should be resolved fast," he told reporters after flagging off the "Riding For Life" 2003 campaign at Taman Tasik Titiwangsa here.

Abdullah said this when asked to comment on the recent leadership change in the MCA, a move said to be aimed at ending the infighting that had dragged on for more than a year in the party.

Vice-president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting has succeeded Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik as the party president while another vice-president, Datuk Chan Kong Choy, has replaced Datuk Lim Ah Lek as the deputy president.

They were elected by the Central Committee (CC) after Dr Ling, who had led the party for about 17 years, and Lim resigned from their posts on May 23.

Abdullah said the new leadership should focus on getting all members to close ranks as there should no longer be any Team A and Team B.

Dr Ling and Lim had led Team A and Team B respectively during a leadership crisis which had seriously split the party.

"The important thing is to give priority to party members, not certain groups," he said.

On another matter, Abdullah said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's participation at the ongoing G8 Summit Informal Dialogue in Evian, France, offered him a great opportunity to convey the country's views on important global issues.

He said it was hoped that the matters raised by the prime minister would get the attention of the G8 countries as his views also reflected those of the 116-member Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), of which Malaysia is the chairman.

Dr Mahathir is among several non-G8 leaders invited by French President Jacques Chirac to attend the dialogue with G8 leaders.

The G8 Summit, which begins today, involves leaders of the eight leading industrialised countries -- the United States, Japan, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Canada and Russia.

-- BERNAMA

RAM KHY YBY