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Lim-MCA

LIM OFFERS OLIVE BRANCH TO LING AGAIN

KUALA LUMPUR, March 15 (Bernama) -- MCA deputy president Datuk Seri Lim Ah Lek, who is embroiled in a leadership tussle, has again held out the olive branch to party president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik for the sake of the MCA and Barisan Nasional (BN).

"Yes, of course, this (settlement proposal) is for the sake of the country. You don't want the opposition to gain more seats. I have always been sincere...(however) some facts have been twisted against me," said Lim, who has been involved in a two-year running battle with Dr Ling.

He told reporters this today when asked to comment on Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's call yesterday for the feuding parties in MCA to "stop squabbling."

Lim was speaking to reporters after attending the Chang Ming Thien Foundation Board of Trustees meeting, which was chaired by Dr Ling at Wisma MCA here.

Lim said he had told Dr Ling before that he wanted to solve the problems amicably but the offer "was not taken up."

The offer, he said, was made after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad came up with a peace plan for the party in April 2002 to end the squabbling in the second largest BN component party.

MCA is now split into two factions, with "Team A" led by Dr Ling, who is Transport Minister, and "Team B" headed by Lim.

"After the peace plan, I offered the president (assistance); we should unite, you and I should unite the party to concentrate on the effort for the general election.

"Let us put our differences aside, unite the party, you (Dr Ling) as president and I (Lim) as deputy; I (Lim) would help you," he said.

In April 2002, the MCA Central Committee agreed to implement the peace plan, which imposed a no-contest ruling, maintained the status quo for all incumbents from the divisional level upwards and required vacancies to be filled through negotiations and consensus between the two factions.

Lim said he offered the help to Dr Ling and the party because he wanted the largest Chinese-based party in the country to do well in the next general election, which has to be held by the end of next year.

He said this would "present the best gift ever to Dr Mahathir for his last term in office."

Asked if there would be a second round of peace talks between the two factions with Abdullah acting as the mediator, Lim said: "That's a million dollar question, but we should heed Pak Lah's (Abdullah) advice."

He could not say if a second round of talks could help resolve the issue once and for all.

Dr Ling, in an immediate reaction, said the party cannot implement the peace plan when accusations were being hurled, without any regard to Dr Mahathir's peace initiative.

"You cannot say you want a peace plan and (yet) you are saying you got thousands of street fighters. (And when) we said please name them for the sake of MCA and Barisan, you refuse to name. That cannot be a peace plan," he told reporters.

"Next day you say you got thousands of money lenders in MCA; and we say name them, you don't want to name them. (This) cannot be a peace plan. The next thing (you say) the Chang Ming Thien fund is not accountable and we ask why, (we get) no answer, that cannot be a peace plan," he said.

Asked if there was a possibility for another peace plan to end the internal dispute, Dr Ling said MCA had always wanted peace.

The party was thankful to the Prime Minister for initiating the peace agenda, which was supposed to bring stability to the party, he said.

-- BERNAMA

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