

23 MAY 2003

MCA-Resignations

MCA CC ACCEPTS DR LING'S, AH LEK'S RESIGNATIONS

KUALA LUMPUR, May 23 (Bernama) -- The MCA Central Committee (CC) tonight accepted the resignations of Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and Datuk Seri Lim Ah Lek as President and Deputy President of MCA.

Vice-President Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn announced this after the CC meeting at the MCA headquarters here.

The meeting unanimously appointed Vice-President Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting as President and another Vice-President Datuk Chan Kong Choy as Deputy President with immediate effect until 2005.

The CC made the decision after two delegations, one led by Dr Fong and another by Datuk Fu Ah Kiow, failed to persuade the two leaders to withdraw their decision.

Their resignations were the formula to the settlement of the leadership crisis in the party.

Commenting on the CC's decision, Datuk Lim Ah Lek said he had done his best to ensure the successful implementation of the peace plan brokered by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Dr Fong said the CC tried its best but failed to convince the two to retract their resignations.

"The CC with a heavy heart accepted their resignations," he said.

He said the CC recorded its appreciation to Dr Ling and Lim for their vast contributions to the party and the country.

"In accordance with Article 23 of the MCA Constitution, the CC unanimously appointed Ong as president and Chan as deputy president with immediate effect until the next party election," said Dr Fong, who is also Human Resources Minister.

Dr Fong said he was sad for not being able to persuade Dr Ling to change his mind.

He said Dr Ling was the longest-serving MCA President, having been at the party's helm for 17 years.

"We have no alternative but to accept and respect his decision to step down as president. We also have the same feelings for Lim," he said.

Dr Fong said he and the CC pledged full support to Ong and Chan.

He said members should work towards forging unity in the party.

Speaking to reporters after the announcement, Ong said he accepted the CC's decision with mixed feelings but felt honoured to be entrusted with the heavy task to serve as the party president.

"At the same time, there is a deep sense of sadness and a heavy heart that Dr Ling and Lim have firmly stuck to their decisions to retire at this moment when the majority of party leaders and members still want them to continue to lead us," he said.

Their resignations created history in the 53-year-old party as this was the first time the president and his deputy were relinquishing their posts together.

Ong said Dr Ling had been an outstanding MCA president for the past 17 years after taking over the party which was reeling from internal turmoil in 1986.

"Under Dr Ling's leadership, the MCA gradually recovered from the crisis and grew from strength to strength and scaled new heights in the 1990s when it achieved resounding victories in the 1995 and 1999 general elections," he said.

He said many Chinese community problems and issues were resolved with

his political wisdom and leadership.

He also paid tribute to Dr Ling for his exemplary role in setting up Tunku Abdul Rahman Colleges nationwide and the establishment of Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman in Kampar.

"I call on all party members to take heed of the advice of Dr Ling and Lim to give unity their top priority. Forget about the factional politics of the past.

"It's time to consolidate and move ahead," said Ong, who is also Housing and Local Government Minister.

At the same press conference, Chan thanked the CC members for giving him the trust and confidence to work with Ong.

He said he would try his utmost to work along with Ong to serve the party, community and the country.

"I'm confident everyone will play their role to bring back unity to MCA after learning a bitter lesson from the party crisis," he said.

Chan also thanked Dr Ling and Lim for their immense contributions to the party, community and the country.

"Special thanks to Lim who has given me so much guidance since I join MCA 23 years ago," he said.

He said although the two had resigned from the top two party posts, with their vast experience in politics, they could still contribute to the party and the country in different capacities.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Ming said the two young leaders chosen to lead the MCA would ensure that the party could function more smoothly and resolve the party's internal issues.

Chua, who is also an MCA vice-president, said the new leadership would be able to give significant contribution to the party in facing the next general election.

He said he was generally happy with and confident of the new MCA leadership.

He said this after the dinner in conjunction with the 43rd general meeting of the Malaysian Medical association.

-- BERNAMA

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