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Chinese-based parties in BN plan big welcome for Abdullah

Chow Kum Hor

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The five Chinese-based Barisan Nasional component parties will jointly hold a mammoth gathering to welcome new Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and pledge support to him.

MCA, Gerakan, Sarawak United Peoples' Party (SUPP), Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) will hold the gathering at a yet to be determined date and venue.

MCA secretary-general Tan Sri Ting Chew Peh said the parties would decide on details of the gathering, to be organised with the help of Chinese guilds and associations.

"It will be our way to welcome Pak Lah (Abdullah) as the new Prime Minister and to pledge support to him," Ting said after the MCA presidential council meeting at the Parliament today.

Ting, who is also Gopeng MP said MCA would also organise a farewell dinner for former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Feb 1, 2004 to thank Dr Mahathir for his various contributions in developing the country over the past 22 years.

Representatives from Chinese guilds and associations will also be invited to the dinner, Ting added.

He also announced that MCA would resume its periodic dialogues with Chinese guilds and associations on issues affecting the community, which were not held for the past two years due to a prolonged MCA crisis.

The next session would be held on Wednesday and would be chaired by president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting and attended by all MCA presidential council members.

Representatives from the Federation of Chinese Associations of Malaysia, the Associated Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry Malaysia and various dialect associations are expected to attend.

"Since all MCA ministers and deputy ministers will also attend the dialogue, the party will also explain government policies to the representatives from Chinese guilds," Ting who is also former Housing and Local Government Minister added.

Ting said among the issues expected to be raised were the economy, politics, culture and education.

Asked if the Chinese education group Dong Jiao Zhong would be attending, Ting, who is also MCA education bureau head, said the organisation would not as it had never been invited to such meetings in the past.