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DPM: Ong, Chan must consult each other

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - New MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting and his deputy Datuk Chan Kong Choy should actively consult each other to ensure unity within the party, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said they now had the opportunity to prove their abilities and provide good leadership.

He hoped the new leadership would be accepted by all within the party and signal an end to the leadership crisis.

"The important thing is that they (Ong and Chan) have to consult each other. Whatever differences and bickering must be solved immediately. The main thing is to put party members first and not just certain groups," he said.

Asked about the Cabinet reshuffle expected when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad returns from abroad on Friday and its possible structure, he said: "I can give no tips on this. You will not get an answer from me."

Meanwhile, Chan today dismissed rumours of the emergence of a Team C in the party, saying there were no more divisions.

"These are all just rumours. There is no such thing as a Team C," he said.

Rumours of a Team C emerged soon after Ong and Chan, who is also the Deputy Finance Minister, were elected to office. The Team C was said to comprise members who were allegedly unhappy with the leadership lineup.

"There are no more teams in the MCA.

"The MCA is now one big united party and our main focus is the next general election," he said.

He was speaking after launching a dumpling festival at Sungei Wang Plaza here.

Ong and Chan were vicepresidents until May 23 when the MCA central committee elected them to fill the party's top two posts.

Asked if there had been discussions between Ong and Chan to fill the two vice-presidencies in the party, Chan said: "Let us not discuss party issues in the open ... everything will be done according to the party constitution."

The other two vice-presidents are Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng and Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn.

Chan also declined to reveal details of the possible Government line-up involving MCA leaders.

"Let us not speculate now ... we will leave it to the prerogative of the Prime Minister," he said.

By convention, the president of a Barisan Nasional component party proposes the nominees from the party to fill Government posts, including ministers, deputy ministers and parliamentary secretaries. It is the prerogative of the Prime Minister to accept the recommendations.

On the party's list of candidates for the next general election, he said the list was not finalised, but by convention, most of the old faces would be retained, although between 20 and 30 per cent would be changed.

He praised MCA Bukit Bintang division chairman Datuk Dr Lee Chong Meng for his tireless efforts in serving his constituents despite him having lost the parliamentary seat in the 1999 general election.

"I will definitely propose that Lee contest the Bukit Bintang seat

again."