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Ling must adhere to hierarchy of succession, says Youth chief

By Sajahan Waheed

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik must adhere to the party's hierarchy of succession providing for deputy president Datuk Seri Lim Ah Lek to succeed him, the party's Youth chief Datuk Ong Tee Keat said today.

He added that Dr Ling should not forget that he too was a product of the system.

He recalled that when Tan Koon Swan resigned as party president in 1986, Dr Ling, who was his deputy then, took over.

"Dr Ling should not forget the past and ought to follow the hierarchy system which is part of the party's regulations. No one protested when he took over as MCA president from Tan in 1986 after having served as the deputy.

"There is no point in making statements that he (Dr Ling) is getting irritated over statements by Lim regarding the question of successor to the party presidency," he said at a Press conference at Wisma MCA here.

Ong was commenting on Dr Ling's statement yesterday that he was irritated by Lim's "nagging" but would remain patient.

Dr Ling's statement was in response to a report in Berita Harian yesterday quoting Lim as saying that Dr Ling should stop "playing politics" and instead focus on party unity in preparation for the general election.

Ong, who is Deputy Youth and Sports Minister, said the party hierarchy was very clear on who would be the next president even before the peace plan was drawn up by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to resolve the internal struggle in the party.

"It is very clear (that) if there is a vacancy for the presidency, then the deputy president will move up. There is no doubt about this. There should not be any question of whether the person is favoured by the party president or otherwise. All quarters should accept this without questioning who the candidate is."

Citing his own case, Ong said he was not only subjected to "nagging" by certain quarters in the party but they had also launched campaigns to tarnish his name.

"I did not cry or go around claiming some people were constantly nagging me. Instead, I opted to be patient and carry on with party work.

"For instance, some people tried to sabotage the 'Proper English, My English' programme conducted by MCA Youth last year. I even received many poison-pen letters which I threw away without reading. I did not make much noise about all this."

On Dr Ling's resignation, Ong said he was puzzled by one MCA vice-president announcing that the episode was over when Dr Mahathir had yet to make a decision on it.

"Dr Mahathir had said he needed time to consider whether to accept the resignation or otherwise. And yet, a party vice-president claims that the chapter is now closed but did not mention by whom.

"This statement causes confusion and I think it is better not to say much on it as I do not want to be tagged as an irritant or (a nag)."

Dr Ling had said last Tuesday that he had submitted an undated resignation letter to Dr Mahathir on Aug 15. On Saturday, Dr Mahathir said he would make a decision "at an appropriate time".

Ong also announced the appointment of five assistant organising secretaries to assist in co-ordinating MCA Youth programmes in their respective States. They are Datuk Lee Chee Leong (Perak), Set Chin Liang (Johor), Tan Boon Yew (Selangor), Kong Sing Chu (Sabah), Lua Han Kun (Terengganu/Kelantan) and Yee Poh Peng (Federal Territory).

Ong also announced the formation of the economic bureau, to be headed by Low Chew June, and the special functions bureau, under Low Kim Piau.

Ong himself will head the political bureau, which will be divided into four committees: management and co-ordination (Liow Tiong Lai), policy research (Tan Yew Chong), community and outreach (Tan Yook Cheng), and strategy and planning (Wee Ka Siong).

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