

14/06/2003

Three-term limit for MCA chief from 2005

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The MCA constitution will be amended at the party's general assembly on Aug 10 to limit the tenure of the party president, Youth head and Wanita head to three terms or nine years, and it would probably start in 2005.

Party president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting said this was decided at the central committee meeting today, the first he chaired since assuming the top post on May 23.

"The details will be further discussed by the constitution review committee and the presidential council before it is tabled at the assembly," said Ong, who is Housing and Local Government Minister.

Secretary-general Tan Sri Dr Ting Chew Peh, who also chairs the constitutional review committee, said the consensus among the grassroots was that the amended tenure start from the next party polls in 2005.

"Usually, such regulations are not imposed retrospectively. The limit will be the only point amended in the constitution during the next sitting," he added.

Since the run-up to the 2001 MCA general assembly, members have called for an amendment to cap the tenure of the president who can now serve indefinitely.

There are also calls to fix the number of divisional delegates to the general assembly regardless of the size of the division to overcome the problem of "phantom members".

He said proposed amendments involving the number of divisional delegates were still being studied as such matters were more complicated.

Ong said the central committee also unanimously decided to appoint immediate past president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik honorary life president for his services to the party, community and nation.

The only other recipient of this title was former MCA president Tan Sri Lee San Choon. The central committee also conferred on Dr Ling the title "Father of Development for Tunku Abdul Rahman College" and asked him to continue chairing the Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman council.

"This is in recognition of the tremendous development and expansion programmes by TAR College and Utar," he added.

Dr Ling stepped down as MCA president on May 23, as part of the peace plan brokered by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. Leading MCA for 17 years, he is the party's longest-serving president.

Ong said he had also decided to retain all MCA office-bearers appointed by his predecessor, including secretary-general, treasurer-general (Tan Sri William Chek) and national organising secretary (Datuk Ong Ka Chuan).

All state liaison committee chairmen will be retained. He described today's meeting as "fruitful".