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Umno leaders welcome MCA's decision to follow peace plan

KUANTAN, Sat. - Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob said today the decision of the MCA leadership was much respected and MCA members themselves have stated that the change in leadership was for the betterment of the party and a solution to the party's internal problems.

"This is a positive development for Barisan Nasional, especially in gearing up for the general election.

"We also feel proud that MCA has successfully followed Dr Mahathir's peace plan. I believe the issue of Team A and Team B has been solved," he said.

In Kota Tinggi, Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the MCA peace plan, which includes replacing the party's top two leaders, must be accepted by everyone in the party for it to work.

He said members should now focus on consolidating the party instead of debating the leadership transition.

Najib said the changing of guard was necessary to dissolve the Team A and Team B camps which had caused a major rift within the party.

He was speaking after a working visit to the Royal Malaysian Navy's Recruit Training Centre in Pengerang.

"MCA should now only be known as MCA. We should not go around asking a party member if he is a Team A or Team B member anymore," added Najib.

In Johor Baru, Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said the State MCA was expected to further strengthen itself following the change of party leadership as it could now concentrate on the task of rallying the support of the Chinese community for the Barisan Nasional.

Ghani, the State BN chairman, said despite the split, Johor MCA had proven itself to be strong and commanded a healthy support from the people.

He said this after attending the State-level Youth Day celebration at the Johor Baru City Council Indoor Stadium.

In Ipoh, Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali expressed hope that MCA's new leaders would work as a team to take MCA to greater heights.

He said Umno would always work together with MCA, regardless of who was at top, and that neither Umno nor MCA would interfere with the workings of either party.

"MCA, as second in the coalition after Umno, must be strong in order for it to form the other strong arm of BN," he said after launching the Sunway City Kedai Rakyat.

In Pasir Mas, Kelantan Barisan Nasional chief Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said he was confident the change of guard in MCA would boost the coalition's strength in facing the next general election.

He believed that Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting and Datuk Chan Kong Choy, who assumed the posts of party president and deputy president respectively yesterday, would be able to unite party members.

Mustapa was speaking after opening the annual meeting of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Sultan Ibrahim Satu's Parent-Teacher Association.