

LEADER WHO SERVED UNDER FOUR PMs

DATUK Lee San Choon, who will be stepping down from the Cabinet and his party post at the end of April, has been in politics for almost a quarter of a century.

At 48 (he celebrated his birthday on Thursday), he will be the youngest Barisan Nasional leader to retire from active politics.

Datuk Lee is still young, especially when compared to many of his Cabinet colleagues. But politically, he is old.

Datuk Lee has served under Prime Ministers Tunku Abdul Rahman, the late Tun Abdul Razak, Tun Hussein Onn and Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He won the Kelang Utara parliamentary seat during the country's first general election in 1959 when he was only 24.

Since then, Datuk Lee has been in the spotlight of Malaysian politics.

Born in Pekan on March 24, 1935, Datuk Lee studied at the Sultan Ahmad Primary School in his hometown. He continued his studies at the Sultan Abu Bakar English College in Johore Baru.

He joined the government service in 1957 as a welfare officer, and later

became a personnel officer in a textile firm.

The man credited with bringing Datuk Lee into politics was a teacher, Haji Musa Ma Gin Wu. According to a 1974 MCA souvenir programme Haji Musa, who was MCA national cultural director in 1959, had lobbied for Datuk Lee to be given a seat in the first election.

After the post independence election victory, Datuk Lee consolidated his position at both State and national level and was appointed executive secretary of the Alliance party in 1961.

He won the Segamat Selatan parliamentary seat in 1964 and became political secretary to Tun Tan Siew Sin (then Finance Minister).

A few months later, he was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Labour and Manpower Ministry. After retaining the Segamat Selatan seat in the 1969 elections, he was appointed Assistant Minister for Special Functions.

He was Deputy Labour and Manpower Minister in 1970, and Deputy Communications Minister in 1973.

He was promoted to a full Minister (Special Func-

tions) in June, 1973.

Two months later, he became the Minister of Technology, Research and Co-ordination of New Villages. After winning the Segamat constituency in 1974, he was appointed Labour and Manpower Minister.

Datuk Lee took over the Works and Utilities portfolio in July 1978 when he retained the Segamat seat.

After the death of Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam, there was a minor Cabinet reshuffle and Datuk Lee was appointed Transport Minister, a portfolio which he held till his resignation.

Datuk Lee became acting MCA president when Tun Tan Siew Sin stepped down in April, 1974. He was confirmed as president at the party elections in August 1975.

Datuk Lee is also a trustee of the Tunku Abdul Rahman College and president of the Malaysian Amateur Basketball Association and is associated with several other social and cultural organisations.

Datuk Lee, who was unchallenged for the party leadership in the last party election, won the DAP stronghold of Seremban last year when he beat DAP chairman Dr Chen Man Hin.



Datuk Lee has a word with his Tan Sri Chong.



Datuk Lee stressing a point at the Press conference. With him are Tan Sri Chong (left) and Datuk Dr Neo.