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Lim says decision to retire final despite pleas

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Datuk Lim Ah Lek reaffirmed his decision not to re-contest the Bentong parliamentary seat despite pleas from about 150 Bentong MCA, Umno and MIC members and leaders of several Chinese associations today.

Most of them drove from Bentong to meet Lim at the Human Resources Ministry here. Lim is Human Resources Minister.

Overwhelmed by their support, Lim, who is also MCA deputy president, broke into tears during the meeting and when met later by the Press said he was "very touched by their appeals".

But he said his decision not to contest in the general election was final as he wanted to retire after 25 years in politics.

In Putrajaya, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Lim's decision to retire would have to be accepted.

"If that is his decision, we will honour his wish. We do not want to force people," he told editors from Chinese and Tamil newspapers at his office today, adding that Lim had served the Government well.

Lim, 56, announced yesterday that he would not defend his Bentong seat and had written to the Prime Minister of his intention to retire "to spend more time with my family".

Lim, who is Pahang MCA chairman, said he had proposed a candidate to MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik for the Bentong seat and it was up to the party leadership to decide.

In Kuantan, party sources said Liow Tong Hai, who is Lim's political secretary, is tipped to contest the Bentong seat.

"He is seen as Lim's protege and Bentong is a familiar playing field for him," a source said.

When contacted, Liow refused to be drawn into the speculation.

"It is not proper for me to say anything," said Liow.

In Petaling Jaya, Wanita MCA chairman Datuk Dr Ng Yen Yen said Lim's decision was a great disappointment but the party would have to accept it.

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