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MCA seeks status quo (HL)

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PUTRAJAYA, Tues. - The MCA today was confident that its share of Cabinet ministers will be maintained in the line-up expected to be announced by the Prime Minister soon.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the party's list, presented to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, made no additional request. It asked for the present number - four ministers, six deputy ministers and two parliamentary secretaries.

"We didn't ask for more positions, so I presume the number will be maintained," Dr Ling told a Press conference after chairing the MCA presidential council meeting at the Transport Ministry.

In the previous Cabinet, MCA representatives were entrusted with the Ministries of Transport, Human Resources, Housing and Local Government, and Health.

Among the names said to feature in the MCA list is that of Deputy Education Minister Datuk Fong Chan Onn who may be made Human Resources Minister, taking over from Datuk Lim Ah Lek who did not contest in the general election.

Deputy Energy, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Chan Kong Choy is expected to take over from Fong as Deputy Education Minister, and Seremban MP Datuk Hon Choon Kim is tipped to replace Chan.

Transport Ministry parliamentary secretary Datuk Chor Chee Heung may take over from Datuk Wong See Wah as Deputy Finance Minister while Datuk Ong Ka Ting is likely to be retained as Deputy Home Minister.

Speculation intensified as Dr Mahathir continued his meetings with BN federal and State leaders to finalise the Cabinet and State Government line-ups.

Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Osu Sukam, who met Dr Mahathir yesterday, had requested for a bigger representation in the Federal Cabinet.

The State traditionally has two representatives in the Cabinet: the Minister of Land and Co-operative Development and a Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

Among State leaders who were seen at the Prime Minister's complex here were Negri Sembilan Umno State liaison chief and Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamad Isa Abdul Samad, who arrived at 9.30am.

Leaving the premises at 12.05pm, Isa refused to comment on his second straight day of meetings at Putrajaya. It was not immediately known whether he met the Prime Minister or his deputy.

However, it is believed that there were some outstanding matters regarding the formation of the Negri Sembilan State Government which had to be sorted out.

Likely Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Syed Razak Syed Zain Barakbah, who met Dr Mahathir yesterday, was also at Putrajaya this morning.

He was quoted by Bernama as saying that his second meeting with the Prime Minister was to discuss "various matters," but declined to confirm or deny speculation that he would be the next Menteri Besar.

Former Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff was also seen entering the Prime Minister's office.

Others seen there were Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman and Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud.

It is reliably learnt that Abdul Ghani came to finalise the list of

State Exco members while Abdul Taib had discussed with the Prime Minister the quota of Federal ministers from Sarawak. Dr Mahathir began his series of meetings with BN leaders and Menteris Besar yesterday. Among those who met him was Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali.

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