

Ling to hand letter to PM today and propose Chan

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues: Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik will hand in his resignation letter to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tomorrow morning.

The MCA president will also submit an official recommendation that Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Chan Kong Choy takes over the ministry.

Both will take place at a "private meeting" with Mahathir before the weekly Cabinet meeting.

Despite appeals from MCA members, Ling has not budged from his decision to quit the Cabinet, which he announced at yesterday's party presidential council meeting.

Today, he received party members

from around the-country, who appealed to him to stay, saying his absence from the Cabinet will weaken the party.

With his resignation, Ling will join deputy president Datuk Lim Ah Lek and secretary-general Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh as the top three party members without Cabinet positions.

His response to these concerns was: "This is a new culture. Nobody likes change, but when change comes, you have to adapt to it."

Ling also said that his retirement may smoothen some of the friction in MCA but added: "I'm happy to do what I have done and I don't want to label this a sacrifice."

He was also firm in his decision to propose Chan as his replacement, saying: "He is a capable young man and the three other vice-presidents are already full ministers. With Chan's inclusion, we will have a better team."

He said he did not have another name in mind should Mahathir eject his recommendation.

This morning, Mahathir hinted that the transport portfolio may be too senior a post for Chan, who was former MCA Youth chief, to handle.

Ling said he does not foresee a reshuffle of the Cabinet as a result of his resignation, but acknowledges that "any such move is the sole prerogative of the Prime Minister".