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MCA never demanded more Cabinet seats, says PM

PETALING JAYA, Wed: The MCA had never made any demand for more seats in the Cabinet, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The party did not make any demand, not even immediately after last November's general election despite its good performance, he said.

"They (MCA) understand that once they start asking for increases, the others will also ask for more. They assured me that they never forced Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik to make any demands," he told reporters after launching the development of the National Exhibition and Convention Centre at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang.

Asked why Ling decided to quit his Cabinet post, Mahathir said he felt that the MCA wanted change and because of that he did not want to stand in the way of any change.

He noted that MCA has denied talk that Ling had asked for more seats for MCA.

"Some people say there are people

who are supposed to be appointed as minister but were not appointed. This is all talk on the ground, partly stimulated by the press," he added.

The Prime Minister said that in his meeting with the MCA president today, he asked Ling to take leave and think about it (resignation) because it is a sensitive matter.

Asked whether he had received any resignation letter, Mahathir said he did not want to receive any letter until Ling made up his mind.

He added: "The MCA has met me and told me that they want him (Ling). Initially, when he (Ling) talked to me, I thought the MCA did not want him.

"So I almost agreed (with his resignation), but now all of the MCA said they want to retain him and it is because of that I have tried to persuade him to stay on."

He said Ling attended the Cabinet meeting this morning as he had not resigned.