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Chan: My absence from party functions not an issue

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - MCA vice-president Datuk Chan Kong Choy said his absence from the Kelantan and Terengganu MCA conventions yesterday should not be an issue.

The Deputy Finance Minister said he thought party president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik would not officiate at both functions and therefore had arranged for meetings at his (Chan's) ministry.

"My absence from both functions is a non-issue. It is impossible to attend the openings of all State MCA conventions, especially if I am overseas or have other official duties," Chan told the New Sunday Times today.

Chan said he was among the MCA leaders who bade Dr Ling farewell at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang last night before the latter started his two weeks' leave in Australia.

Chan, however, refused to comment on talks that his absence yesterday showed there was a split within the party.

After announcing his intention to quit as Transport Minister last Monday, Dr Ling had indicated that Chan should succeed him.

On Wednesday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad advised Dr Ling to take two weeks' leave to reflect on his decision to resign.

Meanwhile, MCA secretary-general Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh said party members should stop speculating on the reasons behind Dr Ling's intention to resign and give him time to think about the matter.

"Many have spoken to me and generally, they feel that Dr Ling should remain as party president and Transport Minister," said Ting after chairing the MCA backbenchers meeting at the party headquarters here today.

Ting, the former Housing and Local Government Minister said the meeting today did not discuss the issue of Dr Ling's decision to quit.

"I hope Dr Ling will reconsider his decision. He is young and has proven his capability. The party and nation still needs him," he said.

Asked if Dr Ling would change his mind upon his return from his leave, Ting expressed confidence that the party president would look into the views of the grassroots as well as party leaders.

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