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Ling: I will stay on (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik has dropped his intention to resign as Transport Minister, ending two weeks of uncertainty following his shock announcement that he was leaving the Cabinet.

The MCA president said today he changed his mind due to overwhelming appeals from various quarters.

Dr Ling said he was touched by the strong support.

"After analysing all these expressions of support and advice from all quarters, be they from within or without the party, I now have a clearer picture of what the majority would like me to do.

"I have made up my mind. I am respecting the wishes of all party members, community leaders, friends and supporters. I will continue to serve," he told a Press conference at Wisma MCA, a day after he returned from two week's leave in Australia.

He was asked to go on leave by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to "think the matter over".

Dr Ling had earlier met Dr Mahathir at Putrajaya to convey his decision to remain in the Government.

"He has always been a source of inspiration and guidance to me. He advised me to stay," he said of the meeting.

Dr Ling, who is still on leave, however declined to take any question at the Press conference, saying reporters had ample time later. He will resume his duties on Monday.

"I don't want this (announcement) diluted and if you have any other question, ask me tomorrow, the day after, next week and I will be happy (to reply)."

Scores of party leaders, whom Dr Ling had earlier met, were also present.

When Dr Ling announced he would continue to serve, a long applause followed.

The atmosphere at the party headquarters was of exuberance with smiling faces all around. Members expressed relief a crisis that had the potential of dividing the party had been averted.

Many also felt the party would emerge stronger after passing this "acid test".

Later, party leaders expressed happiness and relief, saying Dr Ling's service in the Cabinet was still needed.

Other leaders in the Barisan Nasional also welcomed his decision.

On May 22, Dr Ling dropped a bombshell during the party's presidential council meeting when he announced his intention to resign as Cabinet Minister.

The council immediately passed a unanimous resolution rejecting his decision and appealed that he stayed on.

Dr Mahathir, who was informed of Dr Ling's intention a week earlier, was quoted as saying he would ask the Transport Minister to reconsider.