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Ling to 'take note' of members' appeals

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - In what is seen as a positive sign, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik today said he would "take note" of the appeals by MCA leaders from all over the country to reconsider his decision to quit as Transport Minister.

But Dr Ling, who had just met the party's elected representatives late this afternoon, also reiterated that there was "no change" in his quit decision.

He said he would consult the Prime Minister before making a final decision.

Dr Ling told reporters this at his third Press conference of the day, held after he met MCA MPs and Assemblymen.

It is learnt that the delegation had pleaded with him to stay on as his services were still needed and this was not the right time to go. To their surprise, he said he would "ponder over" their request.

This was a change from his responses to earlier groups of MCA leaders who had met him since his announcement yesterday. Then, he had seemed firm about his decision to quit.

As a result, many of the wakil rakyat emerged from the meeting looking cheerful and a few actually expressed the possibility that Dr Ling may change his mind.

Dr Ling had spent the day at his Ministry meeting groups of MCA leaders and members who converged in Kuala Lumpur after receiving news of his resignation.

The different groups held emergency meetings, which all concluded unanimously that Dr Ling should not quit, before making their way to the Ministry to make their appeals.

The party vice-presidents, led by deputy president Datuk Lim Ah Lek, also went to see Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to ask him to "try to use his influence" to persuade Dr Ling to stay.

The three vice-presidents who went to Putrajaya were Datuk Chan Kong Choy, Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn and Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting. The fourth, Datuk Chua Jui Meng, was abroad on his official duties as Health Minister.

The scene at the Ministry was markedly different from yesterday when Dr Ling refused to take questions properly, forcing reporters to block his every step as they tried to get further details.

Looking cheerful, he answered all questions today and even held three Press conferences. The first was held about noon after he met the Selangor MCA leaders.

He said he will hand his resignation letter to the Prime Minister tomorrow.

His second Press conference took place about 3.30pm after meeting the Johor MCA delegation.

At his final Press meeting at 6pm after he met the elected representatives, he said he would "take note" of their appeals.

* See excerpts below of the three Press conferences.