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Just unfounded rumours, says Ling on reshuffle

Patvinder Singh; Chow Kum Hor

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik today described as "unfounded rumours" talks of a Cabinet reshuffle involving ministers from the party.

"I don't know who is coming out with this unfounded rumour. As the MCA president I say it is unfounded...there is no basis at all," he told reporters after meeting the Bavarian Minister for Economic Affairs, Transport and Technology, Dr Otto Weisheu, at his office.

He was asked to comment on reports that there could be a Cabinet reshuffle involving MCA ministers.

Yesterday, he was asked by reporters if the party had requested that the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad have "a minor reshuffle" involving the MCA.

He was asked if the MCA recommended that Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Chan Kong Choy be made Health Minister in place of Datuk Chua Jui Meng while Deputy Home Minister Datuk Chor Chee Heung take over from Chan. He also was asked if the Dewan Rakyat Deputy Speaker Datuk Lim Si Cheng would replace Chor.

Dr Ling had replied that Cabinet reshuffles and Cabinet appointments were the prerogative of the Prime Minister.

He said today that all MCA Cabinet ministers had played an important role and all were efficient leaders in carrying out their duties, and there was no desire to change that.

Asked if Dr Mahathir would consult him in case of any reshuffle involving MCA ministers, Dr Ling said technically there was no need.

"But the relationship between Umno and MCA, between me and the Prime Minister is good. I believe there will be no reshuffle without consultation," he added.

Meanwhile, MCA deputy president Datuk Lim Ah Lek said he was not aware of any reshuffle involving party leaders.

"This is news to me. I only learned of it from the newspapers. It is the prerogative of the Prime Minister to decide on this," Ah Lek told the New Straits Times.

Chua, when contacted by Bernama, said he would continue to serve in the Government as long as his services were needed.

Commenting on a news report that he would relinquish his Cabinet post, he said rumours about his Cabinet position were not new and had been circulating for sometime.

"I don't give much attention to it, as far as I am concerned, it is not going to interfere in my day to day work and I will continue to serve to the best of my ability," he said.

However, Chua said, it was up to the Prime Minister to decide on his Cabinet post. "It is the Prime Minister's prerogative and I will always respect whatever decision made by him," he said. MCA Youth chief Datuk Ong Tee Keat, when contacted, said he had not heard about any changes in the posts of MCA Ministers in the Cabinet.

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