

Ling not asked to step down, says PM

STAR 2 5 MAY 2002

SUBANG: Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik has not been asked to resign from his Cabinet post as rumoured, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He described those who spread rumours of Dr Ling's resignation as "people with bad motives," saying he did not know the motives for this kind of talk.

"I don't know anything about it (the resignation)," he told reporters who asked him

to comment on rumours that Dr Ling was stepping down.

He was speaking to reporters at the Royal Malaysian Air Force Base here yesterday.

On Wednesday, Dr Ling refuted talks that he was quitting as Transport Minister and MCA president, saying these rumours had surfaced three years ago.

Dismissing these rumours as baseless, Dr Ling joked that he would not be surprised if

the rumours started again "three years from now." His supporters have blamed the latest rumours about him on his political enemies.

According to the rumours, Dr Ling would step down before the party central-level elections on June 29 and that the leadership would be taken over by a five-man committee headed by his deputy Datuk Lim Ah Lek and the four vice-presidents.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir

said he was "totally neutral" in the MCA leadership issue and that it was "up to MCA to decide on who to lead."

"I don't know why these people are saying all these things. Last time, they didn't want my peace proposal ... actually it is up to the MCA and its members," he added.

The peace plan, initiated by Dr Mahathir, provides for the status quo for all incumbents from division level onwards to end the party's 14-month-long

leadership crisis.

Asked whether there would be a minor Cabinet reshuffle in the near future to fill up the vacant post after Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia completed his duties as a minister when his two-term senatorship ended on Sunday, Dr Mahathir said:

"Actually there are two vacancies. One of them is finance minister. Anyone interested can apply."