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## Mixed reaction to Lim's return to active politics

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - MCA deputy president Datuk Lim Ah Lek's readiness to return to active politics was met with mixed reaction, with Team A supporters questioning his sincerity while Team B members welcomed the possibility.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, however, refused to comment on Lim's statement.

"It is a democratic party. I do not want to comment," the Transport Minister said after opening the general assembly of the KTMB Bhd Workers Union (RUM).

An aide to a minister aligned to Team A said Lim had always been portrayed as the reluctant politician and he could not understand why Lim hinted at the possibility of becoming active again.

On Lim's claims that he may be able to contribute to Barisan Nasional during the next general election, the source said no one in the party was indispensable.

An MP aligned to the Dr Ling-led Team A said Lim would lose his credibility if he returned to active politics.

"For more than 10 years, he has said he wanted to quit politics. How can he say he wants to remain active now?"

"Before the 1999 general election, Lim even sent his resignation letter directly to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. He bypassed Dr Ling in doing so," he said.

Bentong MP Liow Tiong Lai said Lim had a proven track record in servicing his constituents and the Chinese community besides being very experienced in the Government as he had served as a Minister and State executive council member.

"If there is a need, I am even willing to make way for him to contest in Bentong," said Liow, who is MCA Youth secretary-general. Lim was Bentong MP for three terms before making way for Liow, his former political secretary.

Claiming to speak on behalf of the Youth movement, Liow said the wing welcomed Lim's announcement yesterday and urged him to consider a comeback to help BN win in the next general election.

Serdang division head Datuk Yap Pian Hon said Lim could deliver the Chinese votes for BN, as proven during recent by-elections.

Asked if Lim's return would result in a split in the party, Yap, who is also Serdang division chairman said it would only strengthen the MCA.

When contacted, vice-presidents Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn and Datuk Chua Jui Meng did not want to comment. Two other vice-presidents Datuk Chan Kong Choy and Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting could not be reached.

Yesterday, Lim announced that he was prepared to return to active politics if it would help BN win more Chinese votes in the next general election.

Lim, a former Human Resources Minister, quit active politics when he did not seek re-election in the Bentong seat in 1999 but remained as MCA deputy president.