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PM hints at Cabinet reshuffle (HL)

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LANGKAWI, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he will consider reshuffling his Cabinet following the leadership changes in MCA.

"I will think about it. I will tell you when we decide. There is no need to make an announcement (for now)," said Dr Mahathir, who is also Barisan Nasional chairman.

The Prime Minister said he had yet to decide on Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik's position as Transport Minister.

Dr Ling, who stepped down as MCA president on Friday, had tendered his resignation as Transport Minister to Dr Mahathir in August last year.

His deputy, Datuk Seri Lim Ah Lek, also resigned on Friday.

He was asked whether there would be a Cabinet reshuffle in view of the leadership changes in the MCA, the second largest component party in the BN, and about Dr Ling's position in the Cabinet.

Dr Mahathir said this after a ceremony to welcome the arrival of marathon swimmer Abdul Malik Mydin, 28, who completed the 48km Kuala Perlis-Langkawi swim at the Kuah jetty today.

Newly-appointed MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting was also present.

The MCA central committee had appointed Ong, who was vice-president, to head the party and another vice-president, Datuk Chan Kong Choy, as the deputy.

Asked whether he had discussed the MCA issue with Ong here, Dr Mahathir said: "He just came to say thank you because I have accepted his leadership in MCA. That's all."

On whether he had asked the new MCA leaders to resolve their problems, Dr Mahathir said he did not want to intervene in MCA's internal affairs. "It is the MCA's internal problem, they will handle it themselves."

When approached later, Ong declined to say whether there would be changes to the Government line-up involving MCA leaders.

On his presence here, Ong said he came to thank Dr Mahathir for having confidence in him and his deputy in leading the MCA and for the Prime Minister's support and encouragement.

"For now, we will get our act together to reunite MCA members.

"Our focus is to prepare for the general election," he added.