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Ling to meet PM over Cabinet post

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik who stepped down as MCA president last Friday said he will discuss with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tomorrow his resignation as Transport Minister.

Dr Ling said the MCA leadership transition had proceeded smoothly and it was now time to discuss the next phase involving the Cabinet position.

"As you all know, I have submitted an undated resignation letter expressing my interest to Dr Mahathir in August last year, and it is still valid. Dr Mahathir has very kindly not acted on my letter so far.

"I will discuss letting go my post with him after tomorrow's Cabinet meeting," he said at a Press conference after opening the Railtech 2003 International Conference and Exhibition here today.

Dr Ling resigned as MCA president and Datuk Lim Ah Lek stepped down as deputy president at the party's central committee meeting.

The central committee elected Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting and Datuk Chan Kong Choy as the new president and deputy president.

The new appointments are expected to put an end to the internal crisis in MCA.

Dr Mahathir on Sunday said he would consider reshuffling his Cabinet following the leadership changes in MCA. However, he said he had yet to decide on Dr Ling's position as Transport Minister.

There is widespread speculation that Chan, who is currently the Deputy Finance Minister, would be elevated to a full minister following the change of guard in MCA.

Dr Ling tendered his resignation in May 2000, but decided to retract it following requests and appeals by various parties, especially the MCA leaders.

In January this year, Dr Ling said that he had submitted an undated resignation letter last August.

Dr Mahathir has not made a decision on the matter.

Asked on his possible replacement, Dr Ling said it was the prerogative of the Prime Minister although MCA might be asked for suggestions.

"I can make a recommendation, but it is the Prime Minister's prerogative to appoint anyone to the Cabinet."

On the possible time-frame for him to step down from his ministerial post, Dr Ling said: "It is Dr Mahathir's prerogative to decide. The Prime Minister is known for his unpredictability as he is a very original person. He cannot be predicted by you or me."

Dr Ling said he has also applied for leave.

"However, I do not want to say starting from when and for how long. I will not give you any indication."

On the ministry's current projects, Dr Ling said there were quite a few on-going projects like the logistics study and also the railway project.

"These are among my unfinished agenda which I hope my successor will continue."