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Ling: Ah Lek is an irritant (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said today the "nagging" by his deputy Datuk Seri Lim Ah Lek is getting irritating but he will remain patient.

Responding to a statement from Lim yesterday that he (Dr Ling) was "playing politics" regarding his successor to the party presidency, Dr Ling said even if Lim persisted in making such statements, he would continue to be patient.

"Whoever leads the MCA in future will be decided by the members and not by any single person," said Dr Ling, who is Transport Minister.

He had earlier witnessed the handing over of flat wagons by MMC Metal Industries Sdn Bhd to Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad at the Kuala Lumpur Railway Station (See B1).

Present were Transport Ministry parliamentary secretary Datuk Donald Lim, KTMB chairman Tan Sri Thon Yaw Hong, MMC Engineering Group Berhad chairman Datuk Dr Ahmad Zaidee Laidin and KTMB managing director Mohd Salleh Abdullah.

Yesterday, Lim was quoted as saying in Berita Harian that Dr Ling should stop "playing politics" and instead focus on party unity in preparation for the general election.

The MCA has been split for the past two years with Dr Ling leading Team A, which comprises vice-presidents Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn and Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting, and Lim leading Team B, supported by vice-presidents Datuk Chan Kong Choy and Datuk Chua Jui Meng.

Last Monday, Lim said he was prepared to challenge Dr Ling for the top post in the next party election in 2005, provided there were no other challengers.

Asked if he would raise the issue of his successor at the party's central committee meeting on Wednesday, Dr Ling said the committee would discuss it if raised by any member.

Dr Ling added that the appointment of a new Transport Minister was the prerogative of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.