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ACA FREE TO INVESTIGATE ANYONE, SAYS PM

Mahathir - ACA

From Azman Ujang

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TOKYO, Oct. 20, (Bernama) -- The government gives the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) full freedom to investigate anyone including Cabinet ministers, the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said in this connection the ACA need not brief him on the progress of its investigations on Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu.

The ACA had reportedly completed its investigation on ^{oversea trips.} Samy Vellu, who is also MIC president, on allegations of irregularities in the allocation of 10 million Telekom Malaysia shares to Maika Holdings, the party's investment arm.

+The ACA investigates anyone., Not just MIC ministers but UMNO ministers as well if they (allegedly) commit any wrongdoings,+ he told Malaysian journalists at his Imperial Hotel suite here.

The Prime Minister, who is on one week unofficial visit to Japan, said if the ACA had a case, it would take 'it.. to court..

+If the ACA has no case, it will drop it,+ he added without elaborating on the agency's investigation on Samy Vellu. -- more

▼20/10/15-45MST

CNS0741

U GE 20-10 00153 EG800

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' Mahathir - ACA 2 Tokyo

The ACA had recently interviewed Samy Vellu several times over the case and each session lasted between four and five hours,

Asked on speculation of a revamp of the editorial board of the Utusan Melayu newspaper group, whose majority share-holders are UMNO members, Dr Mahathir, who is UMNO president, said he has yet to be informed of the matter.

+I've not heard or been informed of the matter since I've been abroad,+ he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was not aware whether the Utusan Melayu Group Editor Zainuddin Maidin would be replaced but added: +Of course during the recent UMNO supreme council meeting, we took exception to Utusan's attack on party leaders+.

+They're free to attack us, but if they go overboard, UMNO will not 'keep quiet in this matter, + he said. -- more

▼20/10/16-05MST

CNS0761

U GE 20-10 00170 EG801

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Mahathir - BCA 3 (last) Tokyo

+I'm not aware of changes to the Utusan editorial leadership but what I do know is that there is dissatisfaction in the supreme council,+ he said.

The Utusan Malaysia had recently apologised to Dr Mahathir over its report that the Prime Minister had asked to speak in English when interviewed by an Indonesian television network while attending the Non-Aligned Summit in Jakarta last month.

The Prime Minister, in denying the report, said it was a lie and that it was the TV station which had asked him to speak in English for the interview.

The newspaper had made the allegation when running a series of reports suggesting that the government should stop advertisements in English over Malaysian radio and television.

Dr Mahathir had also criticised the newspaper for deliberately harping on the position of the Malay language and English which the Prime Minister had regarded as a non-issue. -- more

♥20/10/16-34MST

CNS0790

U GE 20-10 00154 EG802

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Mahathir - ACA 4 (last) Tokyo (reopens item)

In SEBERANGPRAI, ACA deputy director-general Mohamad Zawawi Nordin today said the agency has not yet submitted the report on its investigations on Samy Vellu to the government.

There was no new development on the report although the ACA had completed its investigations on Oct 2, Mohamad Zawawi told reporters after opening an anti-corruption seminar.

He did not elaborate but said the case was being handled personally by the ACA director-general Tan Sri Haji Zulkifli Mahrnood.

Only Zulkifli could provide the details to avoid contradicting statements from the ACA, Mohamad Zawawi said.

The ACA had interviewed Samy Vellu four times between Sept 5 and Oct 1.

The sessions lasted three hours on Sept 5, six hours on Sept. 11, three hours on Sept 12 and six hours on Oct 1.--Bernama

♥20/10/17-02MST