

No witch-hunt

SUN 26 JUN 2001

**I am sure Dr Ling will not go
and seek revenge on the people
who did not support him.**

– Mahathir

By **Ferida Abdul Kudhus**

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is confident MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik will not go on a witch-hunt against those who opposed the takeover of Nanyang Press Holdings Bhd.

“I am sure Dr Ling will not go and seek revenge on the people who did not support him,” he said when asked to comment on the outcome of the party’s EGM yesterday where about 53% of the delegates voted in favour of the controversial acquisition.

The prime minister also advised MCA members to close ranks and consolidate.

“The majority, whether small or big, has approved (the takeover). This issue has been settled and they should go on consolidating,” he added after opening the 20th Al Bakara Symposium for Islamic Economies here.

Asked if there would be dissension in the cabinet as a minister and a deputy minister (from MCA) opposed the deal, Mahathir replied: “No, I don’t think so. It is a minor

issue to me. It is an issue of owning or not owning Nanyang, that’s all.”

On the possible backlash from the Chinese community following the decision, Mahathir said there are some people who claim that whatever they say reflects the views of the whole Chinese community.

He said this includes the Suqiu (Malaysian Chinese Organisations’ Election Appeals) and the Chinese school teachers.

“I don’t know whether it (what they claimed) is true or not. What they do is to get the Chinese community to once again oppose the government and support the DAP,” he said.

He said the DAP is unhappy with the strong support the Chinese community gave to the gov-

turn to **PAGE 2**

SUN 25 JUN 2001
Nanyang Issue turned into
Chinese special rights: PM

from FRONT PAGE

ernment in the last general election.

"The community's support in the 1999 election was so strong that for the first time, they rejected (Lim) Kit Siang and Karpal Singh," he said.

Mahathir said the DAP is now working with Suqiu, Chinese teachers and some Chinese organisations to make it look like the government is anti-Chinese.

They bring up issues which have already been settled, such as the issue of assimilation which they claimed they are against.

"They don't want to see Chinese schoolboys mixing with Malay schoolboys in Sekolah Wawasan (vision schools). It is almost as if Malay children are not fit to mix with Chinese children.

"This is a very bad attitude ... we are trying to build a nation and we want the children to play and study together.

"If they don't want to go to the national school, so at least they can go to this Sekolah Wawasan, but they have made such an issue of Sekolah Wawasan that people are scared."

He said they had turned issues, such as the Nanyang takeover, as another Chinese special rights issue.

These groups feel that Chinese newspapers should not be owned by a political party and that a Chinese school may not be anywhere near a national school.

"They also say that Chinese schoolchildren may not mix with Malay or Indian

schoolchildren. These are the so-called Chinese special rights," he said.

Mahathir reiterated that the government has done a lot for the Chinese community where Malaysia is the only country which allows the Chinese to have their own schools and use their own language.

"There are no other countries that allow the Chinese so much freedom and liberty as in Malaysia," he said.

"I challenge the developed countries to show that they are more liberal than us with regard to their Chinese community."

To a question, Mahathir said he does not support the idea of one group controlling the Chinese newspapers and feels that everybody should be given the chance to buy a share in the newspapers.

"But I do notice that many of these Chinese newspapers are very pro-opposition. They have a column for the Opposition and they will play (up) any issue which is good for the Opposition," he said.

He advised newspapers to report the truth and not have an agenda. "Don't have your agenda and then fix your report in order to suit your agenda," he said.

"If you start fixing the reports and try to influence readers, you are not doing your readers a service."

On the appointment of a Chinese political secretary and Chinese press secretary, Mahathir said his decision has been finalised and an announcement will be made soon.