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MCA-Mahathir

DON'T DRAG PM INTO CONTROVERSY, SAYS CHAN

KUALA LUMPUR, June 23 (Bernama) -- MCA leaders should not drag the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir into the controversial takeover of Nanyang Press Holdings Bhd by the party's investment arm, Huaren Holdings Sdn Bhd.

Party vice president Datuk Chan Kong Choy said Dr Mahathir had made it clear yesterday that he never directed MCA to take over Nanyang Press and thus should be left out of the issue.

"This is a big controversy involving the Malaysian Chinese community and I don't think it is fair to drag him into this," he told a press conference here today.

The purchase of Nanyang Press, which publishes the Nanyang Siang Pau and China Press vernacular newspapers, by Huaren Holdings has sparked off a controversy with certain segments of the Chinese community opposing the deal.

Chan alongside MCA deputy president Datuk Lim Ah Lek and fellow vice president and Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng have made known their objection to the takeover.

Asked if the group opposing the deal had met Dr Mahathir over the issue, he said: "We will always get his advice on matters and also provide feedback on the community whenever necessary."

He alleged that MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik had on numerous occasions used Dr Mahathir's name to convince MCA members to accept the transaction.

"The president had used the PM's name and we say that Dr Mahathir should not be dragged into the issue," Chan said.

The MCA holds an extraordinary general meeting tomorrow for members to vote whether the party should go for the deal and keep the 72.35 per cent stake it had purchased in Nanyang Press.

Chan said leaders of the pro-take-over and opposing groups met party secretary general Datuk Seri Dr Ting Chew Peh yesterday and agreed that six speakers from each side be allowed to debate the issue.

They had also agreed to bar observers from tomorrow's EGM and unanimously decided that delegates decide by secret ballot.

"Secret balloting would solve a lot of practical problems as delegates can decide on the issue without any interference," Chan added.

-- BERNAMA

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