

27 APR 2001

Mahathir-Mokhzani

DR MAHATHIR UNAWARE OF SON'S DECISION

By: Harlina Samson

DUBAI, April 27 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he is not aware of the decision made by his son, Datuk Mokhzani Mahathir, to withdraw from the corporate world.

"I only heard this (the decision to opt out). I am in the dark, so I cannot comment. People say he made the decision to withdraw, no reason given," he said when asked about Mokhzani's decision.

Dr Mahathir, on a two-day visit to the United Arab Emirates, was speaking to Malaysian reporters.

Mokhzani, the chief executive officer of Pantai Holdings Bhd and Tongkah Holdings Bhd, yesterday announced his decision to withdraw from the corporate world as he was disappointed with wild accusations aimed at smearing his name and that of his father.

When told of the reasons his son had given, Dr Mahathir said: "Never mind, some people will find fault with whatever we do, they will make baseless accusations and make their own interpretations".

On the reason given that the accusations would tarnish his image as Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir said he did not know what his son had done that could affect his image.

However, he said there had been accusations raised in the Dewan Rakyat that the contract to develop the National Exhibition and Conference Centre in Subang awarded to Kamunting Bhd was owned by Mokhzani.

"He said he did not buy a stake in Kamunting Bhd, the company that he bought owned an interest in Kamunting," he said.

Dr Mahathir said on balance, the equity interest held by Mokhzani only amounted to 0.2 percent.

"If one owns a 0.2 percent interest in a corporation, it is similar to kampung folk buying unit trusts which invest in big corporations like PNB," he said.

Asked how he was taking it, Dr Mahathir said: "I don't know what to feel. I should hope that his business is his business".

"My main concern is that he should not have any business links with the government. I am aware that he has a share in a company that has some business with a hospital, that is all," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Mokhzani's business links were not through him (Dr Mahathir) and that he also did not influence anyone into it.

Dr Mahathir said the practice was that during Cabinet meetings, he would leave if there was any matter discussed involving his family.

"I have left several times although the matters discussed did not directly involve my family. It is better for me to leave, lest people make accusations," he said.

On his visit, Dr Mahathir it has been more productive than he had expected since he was only to deliver a keynote address at the Emirates International Forum.

He said there are business opportunities for Malaysia such as in tourism and trade such as an aluminium smelter which utilises local technology.

"We are interested in the aluminium smelter which could use the power generated by the Bakun hydroelectric project," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia could also use Dubai as a hub for the entry of its goods into the Middle East.

"There are many activities in Dubai which can be adapted to suit our

trade policy," he said.

"It is just that we do not know much about the situation here and they too do not know much about Malaysia. So, it is important to foster closer trade ties with each other."

On the Dubai Internet City (DIC), Dr Mahathir said it would not be competing with Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), instead both could "co-exist" well.

He said the MSC promotes indigenous technology while the DIC goes for investments by major companies in information technology.

-- BERNAMA

HS NM THG