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Dr Mahathir: Mokhzani made his own decision

Ashraf Abdullah in Dubai

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday he did not instruct his son Mokhzani to withdraw from the corporate world, but had told him to refrain from being involved in business activities which had linkages with the Government.

Speaking to Malaysian journalists at the end of his two-day working visit to Dubai, Dr Mahathir said Mokhzani's business activities did not tarnish his (Dr Mahathir's) name in any way because he had nothing to do with awarding the contracts.

Responding to questions from reporters, Dr Mahathir said: "I don't know what to feel. His business is his business. My main concern is that he should not have any business dealings with linkages with the Government.

"I am aware that he has a share in a company that has some business dealings with a government hospital, that is all. But it is not through me. I did not influence anybody.

"The practice in the Cabinet is that if there are issues involving the family members of a minister, he has to leave the meeting.

"I have left the meeting several times although the matter discussed did not involve my family directly. But it is better for me to leave the meeting, otherwise there will be more allegations." He said he only heard of Mokhzani's decision to withdraw from the corporate world while he was in Dubai.

"I don't know why he made the decision," he said.

Dr Mahathir said various allegations, although untrue, were hurled against Mokhzani.

Citing an example, he said allegations were made at the Dewan Rakyat that Mokhzani owned Kamunting Bhd.

The truth was, Dr Mahathir said, Mokhzani had bought a company which had a 0.2 per cent interest in Kamunting.

"If those with 0.2 per cent shares in large corporations can be considered owners, then even poor villagers in Malaysia who have unit trusts through PNB (Permodalan Nasional Berhad) can be considered as owners of these corporations," he said.

Mokhzani announced yesterday his decision to withdraw from the corporate world.

He disposed of his entire interests in companies listed in the KLSE, particularly Tongkah Holdings Bhd and Pantai Holdings Bhd.

He said the decision was made because he was disappointed with allegations made by certain groups who tarnished his name and that of his father.

Mokhzani had a 12.6 per cent direct interest in Tongkah Holdings and 32.9 per cent in Pantai Holdings.

Pantai Holdings is involved in health care related businesses while Tongkah Holdings is involved in diversified business activities.

Mokhzani, who is Umno Youth treasurer, said his withdrawal had nothing to do with the Umno president's proposal to prohibit the extremely rich from contesting positions in Umno.

He also exposed the latest allegation naming him as the biggest shareholder in Kamunting Bhd and claiming that Kamunting had won the tender for the National Exhibition and Convention Centre in Subang. The project has not been awarded yet.