

28 MAY 2001

Mahathir-Nanyang

DR MAHATHIR STAYS NEUTRAL ON NANYANG TAKEOVER BY MCA

RAWANG, May 28 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said he neither supports nor objects to MCA's involvement in the proposed takeover of Nanyang Press by the party's investment arm, Huaren Holdings Sdn Bhd.

"Neither did I give my support nor am I objecting," he said when asked on the proposed acquisition and protest by the editorial staff of two Chinese-language dailies -- Nanyang Siang Pau and China Press -- published by Nanyang Press.

Asked if there was any truth in the Nanyang take-over being politically motivated, Dr Mahathir said: "No, no truth at all."

"Nanyang Siang Pau is a newspaper anybody can take over. Of course that all newspapers in Malaysia are politically motivated including Harakah and Rocket, but nobody minds that.

"But if there is any doubt at all about government being involved or government party being involved, everybody becomes very hyped up like you. Why don't you ask Harakah," he said at a press conference after launching a production train manufactured by Monorail Malaysia Technology at its plant here.

Harakah and the Rocket are official organs of opposition parties PAS and the DAP.

On yesterday's news report that at least nine top executives, including the dailies' editors-in-chief, had been advised to resign by next week, Dr Mahathir said he would not know about it as it was not his business to look after them.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, who was present at the press conference, said Huaren would proceed with the deal if viable.

"If it is a good deal, they will go ahead," said Ling who is MCA president.

On yesterday's abduction of 20 tourists and workers from the Palawan island resort in Southern Philippines, Dr Mahathir said the government had taken all precautions to prevent similar abductions from taking place in Malaysian territories.

"We have taken all precautions and we will make sure that it does not happen in Malaysian territories," he said.

Monorail Malaysia Technology (MMT) is involved in the planning, design, construction, supply, testing and commissioning of the Kuala Lumpur monorail system.

Started in January 1997, the KL monorail project was temporarily stopped the following year due to the economic crisis then.

The current KL monorail construction is due for completion at the end of the year with the monorail service expected to start in July 2002.

-- BERNAMA

HS NHA AZZ RYN