

02/06/2001

I will not interfere in purchase of Nanyang, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today reiterated that he will not interfere in the purchase of Nanyang Press Holdings Bhd by the MCA's investment arm, Huaren Holdings Sdn Bhd.

He said this when asked to comment on the disagreement among top MCA officials over the party buying of the Nanyang Press.

"I wouldn't know that. I am only hearing it from you.

"I don't know what is happening. You cannot expect me to comment on something that you say."

On Wednesday, 32 members of the MCA Central Committee passed a resolution to allow the Huaren Holdings Sdn Bhd and Huaren Management Sdn Bhd to acquire a 72.23 per cent equity stake in Nanyang Press which publishes the Nanyang Siang Pau and China Press dailies.

Eight members voted against the acquisition. They included MCA deputy president Datuk Lim Ah Lek, vice-presidents Datuk Chan Kong Choy and Datuk Chua Jui Meng, Wanita deputy head Datin Paduka Tan Yee Kew and Youth chief Datuk Ong Tee Keat.

Asked about objections from several non-governmental organisations and Chinese groups requesting the Prime Minister to stop the deal, Dr Mahathir reiterated: "It's a business deal. I don't see why anyone should interfere."

Dr Mahathir was also asked to comment on the National Human Rights Commission's (Suhakam) view that Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim be allowed to exercise his right of choice of medical treatment.

Dr Mahathir said the Government should not be expected to accept directives from Suhakam.

"That is Suhakam's view. You cannot expect us to accept directions from Suhakam. In that case, it is better if they replace the Government...and we hand over everything to them," he said.

Asked to describe his trip to the G15 summit in Jakarta, Dr Mahathir said it was fruitful.

He said although there were views that the situation there did not warrant the holding of the summit, it went on well.

"The problems (demonstrations) in Jakarta were only concentrated in some areas just like in Malaysia previously where the demonstrations were isolated..otherwise, in other areas it was peaceful."

Dr Mahathir said the meeting achieved its objective with member countries pledging to address problems faced by developing countries more seriously.

While there, Dr Mahathir also attended the G5 meeting - a body entrusted by the G77 member countries to draft proposals on ways to allow the G77 to act more effectively.

Dr Mahathir said he was also glad that Petronas has opened an office in Jakarta, where it has entered into a co-operation with Indonesia's state-owned oil and gas corporation, Pertamina to explore oil.

(END)