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Ling: MCA preferred choice of community

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Umno's offer to former Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat's Chinese members to join the party is a "one-off" thing and MCA is still the preferred choice of the Chinese in the country.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, saying this today, added that he did not foresee Umno, the backbone of the Barisan Nasional, opening its doors to other races in other States at the moment.

"There is no circumstances that merits such consideration," said Dr Ling after chairing the party's weekly presidential council meeting.

He was commenting on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's announcement yesterday that Chinese members of the now-defunct Akar can be absorbed into Umno.

The Prime Minister, who is also Umno president and Barisan Nasional chairman, had said that although Umno was for the Malays, it had also accepted non-Bumiputeras like Malaysian Thais as members.

Dr Mahathir said this when announcing the dissolution of Akar in Kota Kinabalu yesterday.

Asked whether Umno's proposal to allow the Chinese to be admitted into the party would dilute MCA Sabah's position within the BN, Dr Ling said the community there would have more choices now.

The MCA, he added, was a late entrant into Sabah politics as parties like the SAPP and LDP, which also appealed to the Chinese community there, had been set up in the State longer.

"In Sabah, the circumstances are different."

Asked about reports that the MCA-controlled Star Publications Bhd is among three companies being wooed to take up a controlling stake in Nanyang Press Holdings Bhd, Dr Ling said it was natural for any companies to explore new business opportunities.

Dr Ling said party leaders did not interfere in commercial decisions as they had trust in the people managing the businesses.

When pressed if he knew if any such deals had taken place, Dr Ling said he was informed that "certain processes were going on".

DAP national chairman Lim Kit Siang had expressed concern that media freedom would be restricted if the takeover materialised.

Commenting on Lim's statement, Dr Ling said every newspaper had its own stand and was free to criticise.

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