

23 JUN 2001

Ling-EGM

MCA CENTRAL COMMITTEE PAVES WAY FOR SMOOTH TAKEOVER OF NANYANG

KUALA LUMPUR, June 23 (Bernama) -- The MCA central committee today resolved that Article 174 of the party's constitution supercedes Article 150, paving the way for a smooth buyout of Nanyang Press Holdings Bhd by Huaren Holdings Sdn Bhd.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the decision was reached at an emergency central committee meeting where 32 party leaders voted for the resolution while eight opposed the move.

"Under Article 174, which is a new provision, the central committee is the final arbiter or interpreter of the constitution and the interpretation (of the constitution) is final and cannot to be taken to any other court of law," he told reporters after the MCA emergency central committee meeting held at the party's headquarters here today.

He said Article 150 of the MCA constitution did not apply in the acquisition of Nanyang Press Holdings Bhd.

Article 150 of the party's constitution states that any land, buildings or other property owned by the party shall not be charged or mortgaged to secure aggregate borrowings and/or outstanding liabilities exceeding such limits must have been previously approved by the General Assembly.

"Today we (the central committee) resolved that pursuant to Article 174 of the party constitution, the purchase of the shares in Nanyang Press Holdings Bhd and Star Publications Malaysia Bhd do not fall within the ambit of Article 150," Ling reiterated.

A lot of criticism has been hurled against the MCA the past one month, including from its deputy president Datuk Lim Ah Lek and vice presidents Datuk Chua Jui Meng and Datuk Chan Kong Choy.

They claimed that the acquisition of Nanyang Press Holdings should have gone through proper legal procedures including obtaining the endorsement of the party's general assembly.

The party had also come under fire from certain segments of the Malaysian Chinese community who felt that the purchase of Nanyang Press Holdings, which published the Nanyang Siang Pau and China Press newspapers, would curtail Chinese press freedom in the country.

This massive disapproval from the community and certain party leaders prompted the MCA leadership to call for the extraordinary general meeting (EGM) tomorrow, where delegates would cast their ballot papers to endorse or oppose the deal.

Ling also hit out at the faction against the takeover saying that those objecting to the purchase were "changing goal post" to suit their needs.

He said with the convening of the EGM the party had exhausted all available political avenues to deliberate on the deal.

"With all humility we called for the EGM but the goal post has been changing, they (Lim and Chua) wanted a share trustees' meeting and we called for one.

"They came and were given notice of the meeting but they refused to ratify the short notice of the meeting although they had said earlier that they would vote against (the buyover).

As for the EGM, he said all delegates attending the meeting should be objective of the issue at hand.

"I appeal to everyone. Let the EGM, the highest body of the party, make its decision tomorrow but once the decision is made please let us all unite together," he added.

Dr Ling also said he had advised the faction opposing the deal that he does not want to lose any talent currently in the party.

"We want a 100 per cent MCA, I don't want to see a 70 per cent or a 80 per cent MCA but a 100 per cent MCA and I think it (the message) was taken very well," he added.

Ling also said the party had received three proposals from business consortiums for the acquisition of Nanyang Press Holdings Bhd from Huaren Holdings Sdn Bhd, MCA's investment arm.

Earlier, party youth head Datuk Ong Tee Keat attempted to submit a memorandum on the resolution but Ling politely refused.

"Ong Tee Keat wanted to see me to hand me a memorandum, passed at the Youth EGM this morning. I asked him if the EGM was constitutional or unconstitutional... maybe it is too early to interpret, but I leave it to the MCA Youth central committee to decide on its legality," he said.

Asked on his reaction to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement yesterday that he did not direct MCA to buy over the two newspapers, Ling said: " I don't know what he said...I have not read the papers yet".

-- BERNAMA

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