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Mahathir-MCA

PM SAYS HE GAVE PERMISSION FOR MCA TO TAKE OVER NANYANG PRESS

KUALA LUMPUR, June 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he gave the green light to MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik for the party to buy Nanyang Press Holdings Berhad.

However, he also told Dr Ling to sell some of the stakes, he said.

"I gave the green light for him (Dr Ling) to buy but I also said that you (Dr Ling) should sell off some of the shares and not own the whole thing," he said at a news conference after attending the Umno general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

Dr Mahathir, who is also the Umno president, was asked to clarify newspaper reports quoting Dr Ling as saying that the prime minister had given permission for MCA to take over Nanyang Press Holdings.

The purchase of Nanyang Press Holdings by the MCA's investment arm, Huaren Holdings Sdn Bhd, had drawn various reactions from the MCA leaders as well as the Chinese community.

The MCA is now offering the 72 per cent stake in Nanyang Press Holdings, which publishes the Nanyang Siang Pau and China Press newspapers, to the highest bidder.

Dr Mahathir said it was the MCA's right to take over newspapers as there was no law in this country which prohibited political parties from doing so.

"This is an MCA thing. They want to take over a newspaper. They have a right to take over a newspaper. If any party wants to take over a newspaper, there is no law in this country which says that political parties cannot take over a newspaper.

"But I did tell them that there may be certain reactions which are not very favourable towards the takeover," he said.

Besides, Dr Mahathir said, the MCA had also made it clear that it was willing to sell off some of the stakes later.

"...so I don't see why there is unhappiness about this thing. They are willing to sell it off...of course today they take over but it doesn't mean they are going to keep it," he said.

In Ipoh, MCA leaders opposing the purchase of Nanyang Press Holdings declined to comment on Dr Mahathir's statement.

Deputy President Datuk Lim Ah Lek and vice-president Datuk Chua Jui Meng, who are leading the opposition against the deal, said they would need to verify the statement first.

"We don't know (about the statement). We have to see what he says...we want to verify it first," said Chua after a briefing on the issue for Perak MCA members here tonight.

Also present at the briefing were another vice-president Datuk Chan Kong Choy and several other party leaders.

-- BERNAMA

AR AO