

24/07/2003

Chinese dailies focus on King Ee again

Balan Moses; Ramlan Said; Lim Chee Wei

STORIES revolving around Ong King Ee, a triad kingpin currently sought by police, continued to dominate the front pages of major Chinese dailies.

Yesterday, all reported his suspension from the MCA, a decision made by the party's presidential council.

The papers, like the Oriental Daily News, speculated on Tuesday that the council would make some important decisions regarding the matter, including suspending Ong's membership until the completion of police investigations.

The China Press had over the weekend touched on the possibility of the party resorting to such action to safeguard its image.

The report said according to party sources, the council was determined to put an end to public discussions on Ong's connection to triad activities. Taking into consideration the long-term interests of the party, proposals such as strict scrutiny of applications of new members would also be studied.

Confirming that the party was seriously looking into introducing strict background checks on membership applicants, MCA secretary-general Tan Sri Ting Chew Peh said the matter would be further discussed by the presidential council, Nanyang Siang Pau reported on Tuesday.

He said the party took a serious view of allegations that one of its branch chairmen was linked to triad activities.

Sin Chew Daily on Tuesday front-paged party president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting's comments that the party would review its present recruitment procedures to avoid infiltration of "negative elements".

Strict background checks would also be carried out on members holding key posts at branch and divisional levels, Ka Ting said.

Another issue getting prominent coverage was the water spat between Malaysia and Singapore. It had hogged the limelight in the Chinese dailies even before the National Economic Action Council published a booklet on the issue.

With three full-page advertisements on the water dispute, Sin Chew on Monday also dedicated two full pages to articles countering the arguments put forward by Singapore.

The advertisements also appeared in Nanyang the same day.

The two dailies also carried the AFP interview with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Monday, with Sin Chew dedicating page two and three of its national edition to the interview while Nanyang gave it a full-page coverage in page three.