

Ong keeps mum on Lau's bid to buy Nanyang

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KUALA LUMPUR: The offer to buy Tan Sri Tiong Hiew King's stake in Nanyang Press Holdings has been brushed aside by the MCA.

MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting said he was not sure of Sarawak timber tycoon Lau Swee Nguong's intentions to acquire Nanyang, which publishes *Nanyang Siang Pau* and *China Press*.

"Personally, I am not familiar with him.

"Beyond this, I've got nothing to add," Ong said after chairing the party's presidential council meeting yesterday.

Questioned that people will see the sale to Tiong as an unhealthy development to create a media monopoly, Ong said he respected their opinions.

"It all depends on how people see the issue. Anyone can express their views and I respect their opinions without adding any personal sentiments into it.

"At the end of the day, I will leave it to the community to decide," he said.

On Sunday, Lau, the chairman of the Sibu-based KTS Group of Companies, which owns *Oriental Daily News* as well as several other newspapers in Sarawak, had offered to buy media baron Tiong's entire stake.

Although he refused to name the price, Lau had pledged to split the shares and resell them to any corporation,

society or individual from the Chinese community upon completion of the transaction, with the caveat that buyers should not own more than five per cent of the entire paid-up capital of Nanyang.

He said he made the offer to ensure the continued development of the Chinese media, as well as in response to numerous requests from the Chinese community.

As a kickstart, Lau said he would raise RM5 million and donate it to the Chinese community to help them buy Nanyang shares.

On another matter, Ong said the party is currently conducting a nationwide drive to brief members on how to better understand current issues.

The first leg of the roadshow began last Friday in Selangor. Yesterday's briefing was for Federal Territory members.

"The briefings are for us to get feedback from members and to form a closer rapport with them," he said.

He added such briefings were not unusual and were not due to the recently-concluded Umno assembly which saw some delegates making inflammatory remarks.

"The briefings are on all issues that affect the Chinese community.

"We have been doing this since 1997 and it has helped the party function effectively," he said.