

Lim blasts Ling over Nanyang 'mistake'

KUALA LUMPUR: The feud between former MCA deputy president Tan Sri Lim Ah Lek and former president Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik is far from over.

Lim came out with guns blazing yesterday after years of silence, accusing Dr Ling of being responsible for Nanyang Press Holdings Bhd's loss, which he estimated at RM100 million.

He took his former boss to task for insisting that the then purchase of the controlling stake in the company was sound — despite the recent sale of 21.01 per cent of the shares.

Lim said the MCA announcement on Tuesday that the party was only retaining a 23.38 per cent stake in the company was proof that Dr Ling had made a mistake.

"If he's bold enough, he must apologise to both MCA members and the Chinese community. They expect an apology and that's the least he can do," he said when commenting on Dr Ling's statement that the purchase in 2001 was politically and commercially right.

Lim, who stepped down with Dr Ling in 2003 to settle a leadership tussle, urged Dr Ling to "be a gentleman and apologise". He said Dr Ling should also stop blaming the present party leadership for losses suffered by Nanyang Holdings,

which publishes *Nanyang Siang Pau* and *China Press*.

"Dr Ling is responsible for the losses. Without him as president, the acquisition would not have gone through. This is a fact he can't deny," he said.

Party president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting had announced that Huaren Holdings, the investment arm of MCA, had sold the shares to Ezywood Options Sdn Bhd, a company controlled by Sarawak tycoon Tan Sri Tiong Hiew King.

Lim also took issue with Dr Ling over who was responsible for MCA's acquisition of Star Publications Bhd, which publishes *The Star*.

He said the decision to take over Star Publications was made by former president Tan Sri Lee San Choon. He said Dr Ling had wanted to sell 39 per cent of Star shares to Malaysian Plantations Bhd managing director, T.K. Lim, who held a 12 per cent stake, in November 1989.

Lim said Dr Ling had claimed that the sale would enable the party to settle debts totalling nearly RM14.5 million.

"Former Star director Datuk Wong Mook Leong objected to the proposal and the rest of the central committee members agreed. Had the sale gone through, MCA would have lost its majority stake

in the company," he said.

Meanwhile, former vice-president Datuk Chua Jui Meng, who challenged Ong for the party presidency and lost, said it was common knowledge since 2001 that the party would eventually sell Nanyang to Tiong.

"The Chinese community knew about this intention all along. It's no secret," he said.

Chua said it would have been better for Nanyang to be sold to another company to prevent allegations of monopoly besides creating space for competition.

He hoped Tiong would fulfil his pledge to ensure media independence for the newspapers.