

LET'S SUE EUROPE !

Mr Li Ka Shing, the richest man who ever lived, is not happy at being roasted alive by the European Parliament.

In a 23-page report, released last week, it was alleged that the great man's publicly listed entities account for between 25 percent and 33 percent of the entire capitalisation of The Stock Exchange of Hongkong Ltd.

Mr Li was quick to deny the allegation, saying that, at most, his companies account for only about 15 percent of the stock market's total capitalisation in the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

It is surprising that the European Parliament could be so wrong about its statistics because Mr Li Ka Shing's interests in the stock markets of the HKSAR are all concentrated in just 6 entities*:

Cheung Kong (Holdings) Ltd (Code: 1 – Main Board)
Hutchison Whampoa Ltd (Code: 13 – Main Board)
Pacific Century CyberWorks Ltd (Code: 8 – Main Board)
Cheung Kong Infrastructure Holdings Ltd (Code: 1038 – Main Board)
Hongkong Electric Holdings Ltd (Code: 6 – Main Board)
tom.com Ltd (Code: 8001 – The Growth Enterprise Market)

* Not including material investments of 9 percent and more in such companies as Town Health International Holdings Company Ltd (Code: 8138 – The Growth Enterprise Market) and the 3.28-percent interest in the latest company, listed on the GEM: Tong Ren Tang Technologies Company Ltd (Code: 8069).

As at today's stock market prices, the aggregate market capitalisation of the above-named companies only amounts to about \$HK820 billion, give or take a couple of billion dollars, either way.

The very ugly suggestions, made by the European Parliament, were that Mr Li Ka Shing gets preferential treatment from his friend, Chief Executive of the HKSAR, Mr Tung Chee Hwa.

This is quite preposterous because Mr Tung Chee Hwa, as everybody knows, was elected to his position in 1997 when the Government of the PRC installed him as the choice of the 1.30 billion human population of the PRC.

Also, it was well known at the time of the election of the First Chief Executive that he was, after all, the people's choice: There was an election process that guaranteed it.

Following the tabling of the Irish Euro Member of (the European) Parliament, Mr John Cusnahan, TARGET has been told, by usually reliable sources, that Mr Li Ka Shing has been considering his options with regard to obtaining legal redress.

This is quite understandable because, if Mr Li Ka Shing were named Mr Lee Kuan Yew, the Senior Minister of the Republic of Singapore, no doubt there would have been a libel action, issued by now – naming Europe as the Defendant.

Mr Lee Kuan Yew has been terribly successful in suing people who do not like him, his ways of ruling Singapore, of any member that is elected to run the country.

With Mr Li Ka Shing's immense wealth, right or wrong, he could swamp anybody with hundreds of legal actions, tying up forever his less well-heeled critics.

Of course, when Mr Lee Kuan Yew initiated legal actions in Singapore, he had the Singapore High Court at his back.

It is said that he never lost a case.

His brother is, also, a solicitor in the island republic so that Senior Minister Lee gets a lot of good legal advice.

In the case of Mr Li Ka Shing, he has the ear of Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa, who is not afraid to speak his mind, telling the world that his friend, Mr Li Ka Shing, has been unfairly tarred and feathered by the European Parliament.

Immediately upon hearing that his friend was under fire, yet again, Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa came out, saying that Hongkong's economic freedom was among the best in the world.

Mr Tung Chee Hwa roundly rejected the European Parliament's 23-page report, which alleged that Mr Li Ka Shing and his companies had an unfair influence on the economy of the HKSAR.

Mr Tung Chee Hwa, in defence of the HKSAR economy and his friend, said: *'Let me tell you this: Hongkong's economic freedom is one of the best in the world. It is the same, or better than, any of the advanced countries.'*

Quite right, too.

Of course, there is the matter of that Li Ka Shing threat of a few months ago, a threat to the effect that, if the HKSAR Press criticize the great man, he may consider pulling out some of his investments in the HKSAR.

There followed a sell-off on the HKSAR stock markets, immediately.

Probably just a coincidence.

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