

Helping out troubled Govt firms

By
KHAIRUDDIN HASSAN

ALOR STAR, Thurs. — A special task force has been set up by the Government to look into the affairs of ailing Government-sponsored companies, the Prime Minister said today.

He said a special "salvage team", based in the Finance Ministry, had also been set up to help save these companies.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the special salvage team comprised experts in the fields of management and finance.

Opening the \$15-million Kedah State Development Corporation head-

quarters building here this afternoon, the Prime Minister expressed concern that many of the 900 companies, in which the Government had equity, were struggling.

"Some of them are losing very badly. This is either due to poor management on the part of directors, or some managers are involved in some hanky panky," he said.

"To overcome this, we formed the

□ LAZY MPs WILL BE DROPPED

— PM: P3

special task force to look into the affairs of the companies.

"The task force is setting up a data base to collect and compile comprehensive details of all the companies.

"The companies have been told to co-operate with the task force so that it can have an early warning system while monitoring their performances."

Dr Mahathir said the moment the

task force found unusual occurrences in any of the companies, it would send the special salvage team to look into the company's accounts, he said.

He dubbed the salvage team the Finance Ministry's "Fire Brigade Team".

"We are not trying look over the shoulders of the managers or spy on the companies. All we want to do is set up an early warning system so that corrective measures can be carried out immediately to save the struggling companies soonest possible," he said.

"We do not want the companies to sink beyond salvage just because we learnt of their problems too late.

"Honest and diligent managers should not be unduly worried by the setting up of the task force and the salvage team.

"They should co-operate fully by providing all information needed by the data base so that the task force can help them achieve success," he said.

The Prime Minister stressed that the success of the companies would benefit the people and not the Government as successful Government companies would eventually be handed to the people through the Amanah Saham Nasional (ASN).

He said that the capital pumped into the companies was derived from the people and therefore the successful companies should be returned to the people.

"The State Economic Development Corporations are unhappy with this because it would deprive them of companies generating revenue for them.

"This is unfortunate because when the Government manages the country, it is not its intention to derive profits.

"The profits should go

★ TURN TO P2. COL 7

PM: Govt has people's interests in mind

MS1 - 2 MAY 1986
● FROM PAGE ONE

to deliver the goods after the election. This can easily be done and the people will support the Barisan Nasional.

"But we are not prepared to do this because we are not irresponsible. Other Governments would probably adopt such tactics but not the Barisan Nasional.

"We have to study the problems and constraints facing the country carefully.

"In these times of economic slowdown, we have to make some sacrifices by tightening our belts and by being thrifty until the situation returns to normal," he said.

The Prime Minister warned that the country's independence would be lost if it was forced to borrow money to accommodate demands.

"What will happen if we cannot settle our dues? We will be indebted for as long as we are unable to repay our debts and when this happens, we will lose our freedom."

Commenting on suggestions that Cabinet Ministers take a pay-cut, Dr Mahathir said this had been done since 1982.

"All Ministers and even Menteri Besar have had \$1,000 deducted from their salaries since 1982.

"As part of the Government, we have the right to increase the salaries for the Ministers and the Prime Minister.

"In a neighbouring country, the Prime Minister commands a monthly salary of \$36,000 but in Malaysia the Prime Minister earns only \$8,000 per month. Out of this \$1,000 has to be donated back to the Government monthly.

"But we have not increased the salaries because we not only appreciate the country's problems but also have the interests of the people uppermost in our minds.

"We have the powers but we have never abused them because we strive to serve the people. We are aware that we have to go back to the people every five years," he said.

The Prime Minister assured the people that the Government would entertain the demands and requests when it had the funds.

Dr Mahathir was confident that most people appreciated the constraints faced by the Government and were prepared to make the sacrifices.

"Only certain people simply refuse to understand. They are like small kids throwing tantrums when the parents refuse to give in to their demands," he said.