

Murdoch outfit assures Dr M on STAR TV

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation today responded to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's comment on its purchase of a majority share in Hong Kong's STAR Television by giving an assurance that it intended to make the satellite network "a service which Asian families can enjoy in their homes".

Mr L.J. Holloway, relying on behalf of News Corporation, said in a state-

ment faxed from Hong Kong that the company appreciated Dr Mahathir's concern regarding its purchase of a majority share in STAR TV.

Holloway, who is the deputy chairman and chief executive of the *South China Morning Post* newspaper, an associate of News Corporation, said the purchase was based on very careful commercial considerations and the purchaser was mindful of the possible sensitivities of the Governments in

the region.

The Prime Minister, speaking to reporters in Bandar Seri Begawan at the end of a three-day visit to Brunei on Tuesday, expressed concern, that STAR TV might join other Western-controlled media "to create friction and instability in this region so that the West can compete with us".

Dr Mahathir cited the case of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* which in 1987 reported that Malaysia had

proposed to sell Limbang to Brunei. The Government sued the Hong Kong-based magazine and won. It was ordered to retract the report and apologise and it complied.

Commenting on the STAR TV, Dr Mahathir said: "Why has Murdoch bought 64 per cent of STAR TV for US\$500 million (RM1,300 million) if it is not to control the news that we are going to receive?"

Said Holloway: "We are

conscious of the Asian way of life and its unique cultural, historical and religious heritage. We will not presume to intrude into the domestic affairs of any country.

"We can assure the Prime Minister that the very expensive and valuable lessons we learnt from our experience in the United Kingdom through British SKY Broadcasting (SKY Channel) were very much in our minds when we decided

on this course of action.

"We intend to make STAR TV a service which Asian families can enjoy in their homes and a service which (the) Governments in the region will find both friendly and useful.

"We hope that the Prime Minister will give us an opportunity to explain to him our aims and aspirations in Asia and trust that in doing so, we would at least allay some of his reservations."