

18 OCT 1997

Khalil-Support

PAHANG FOLK SUPPORT MAHATHIR

PEKAN, Oct 18 (Bernama) -- About 18,000 people turned up for the launch of the first Malaysian-made truck here today to show their support for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad although he was absent.

Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob told reporters after the gathering that Dr Mahathir had been advised to rest after a bout of flu.

Most of those present today had been informed that the prime minister would not be present but they wanted to attend to show their undivided support for him, he said.

In view of the large crowd present, the state government and the organiser, DRB-Hicom, turned the occasion into a leader-meet-the people gathering, he added.

DRB-Hicom executive chairman Datuk Wira Mohamed Saleh Sulong, who was present at the news conference, said he was informed that Dr Mahathir could not attend the launch last night.

He said that in view of the important role played by Dr Mahathir in the development of DRB-Hicom, the management decided to postpone the function so that the prime could perform the launch of the national truck himself.

DRB-Hicom is the maker of the national truck through its subsidiary, Malaysian Truck and Bus Sdn Bhd (MTB). Present was Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's department Datuk Fauzi Abdul Rahman, who is also the MP for Kuantan.

Khalil said that the show of support by the people was a clear signal to the foreign media and fund managers who had attacked the Malaysian currency that not only the people of Pahang but all Malaysians did not have to be forced to express their support for the prime minister.

"I will convey to the prime minister the support of the people of Pahang for him to continue leading the country. You have all seen for yourselves the crowd that came and even we (state government and DRB-Hicom) were surprised because we only expected a few thousand to turn up after being informed that the prime minister would not be present," he said. --

BERNAMA

AH JK