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SALEH REFUTES APPOINTMENT IS TEMPORARY

KUALA LUMPUR, March 11 (Bernama) -- Datuk Mohd Saleh Sulong today brushed aside speculation that his appointment as DRB-Hicom group chairman is only temporary.

"We have to see about that...if you are talking in terms of waiting for another Yahaya (the late Tan Sri Yahaya Ahmad) to come along," he said.

"Then, I would have been in this position long enough," he told newsmen after a 45-minute meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and 160 senior officials of the DRB-Hicom group.

Datuk Mohd Saleh was appointed chairman of the group following the death of Yahaya in a helicopter crash in Kuala Lipis, Pahang, last Monday which also claimed the lives of his wife and pilot.

To a question that certain parties are not satisfied with him being the custodian of the family-controlled companies of Yahaya, he said: "I wonder who they are."

On the tenure of the custodianship, he said: "I had some understanding with the late Yahaya...I don't think I want to disclose something so intimate as it is a family matter."

He however said the late Yahaya's children will be appointed into the boards of companies under the DRB-Hicom group "when they are ready."

"First, they have to complete their education," he said.

Asked whether his custodianship provides him with exclusive voting rights, he said he is not alone but is aided by another custodian.

"He is very close to the family members but I can't disclose his identity," he added.

On the lower share prices of companies under the DRB-Hicom group when they were requoted on the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange, he said, "I am relatively happy with the slight weakening of the prices when the counters reopened yesterday...on the average, the counters eased less than five percent."

"I'm sure the counters will pick up and stabilise in the next few days," he added.

On the impact of the Prime Minister's reassurance to the new management and the support for the entire group at the meeting here today, Datuk Mohd Saleh said that "fundamentally, the company is sound and the continued government support has never been in doubt."

The company has also received support and assurances by those it has business dealings with such as bankers and suppliers," he added.

The group is intact, he said, adding that he had also received pledges of support from the management.

He said there is no change in the structure or hierarchy of the DRB-Hicom management.

"The difference is that before we had Yahaya, but now no more...we must operate and move on. I must ensure this continuity," he said. -- BERNAMA

AD MR GC