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SPOTLIGHT ON YAHAYA-RELATED FIRMS UPON RE-QUOTATION ON KLSE

KUALA LUMPUR, March 8 (Bernama) -- Investors will closely watch the performance of nine counters related to the late Tan Sri Yahaya Ahmad when they are requoted on the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange on Monday.

Hicom Holdings, Diversified Resources Bhd, Golden Pharos, Kedah Cement, Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional Bhd, Edaran Otomobil Nasional, Gadek Malaysia, Gadek Capital and Eastern Pacific Industrial Corporation were temporarily suspended at the companies' request since Tuesday following the sudden demise of their chairman, Yahaya, on Monday night in a helicopter crash.

Analysts when interviewed that the temporary suspension was a pre-emptive strike to prevent the prices of their shares from reeling under selling pressure during the initial period of uncertainty.

DRB was last traded at RM9.40, Hicom at RM7.10, Kedah Cement at RM4.80, Proton at RM16.00, Gadek at RM19.80, Gadek Capital at RM6.60, EON at RM24.90, Golden Pharos at RM5.05 and EPIC at RM4.64.

An analyst said the companies did the right thing coupled with the fact that the market was in a bearish mood. But detractors felt that the KLSE should have allowed market forces to determine their value. The KLSE's Composite Index dropped 19.46 points to end the week at 1,251.21 while the Emas Index fell 7.86 points to 366.25.

"When a company is temporarily without a leader, it leads to a period of uncertainty," another analyst said, adding that the companies had the right to prevent excessive manipulation and speculation on the stock market.

In one of the many efforts to reassure the market that everything was well, Rating Agency Malaysia Bhd was also quick to say that no changes were required to the assigned ratings of DRB-HICOM Group's private debt securities after having reviewed the debt quality of their respective debt issues.

The announcement restored confidence to the various companies as there had been concerns over the various private debt securities and loans that had been made.

The analyst said the government, which still has substantial interests in the Hicom Holdings Group, also did well by reassuring that it would continue to support all of Yahaya's project.

A further endorsement came from both Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim who expressed confidence in the new chairman of DRB-Hicom group, Datuk Saleh Sulong.

Saleh was appointed following consultations with the prime minister.

Anwar also reassured that there would be not by any change in equities held by the government in the companies headed by Saleh.

Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, said Saleh's close association with Yahaya as well as his experience would enable him to successfully manage companies under the group.

Saleh, who has an indirect stake in DRB, mainly through Gemilang Nominees Sdn Berhad, has been Yahaya's close associate for 18 years.

Saleh, who was appointed to the DRB board on June 26, 1992, is a member of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA), United Kingdom.

Besides being involved in the motor industry for some 20 years, he has also experience in financial services, transport services, vehicle

inspection, property and construction.

An analyst with a foreign stockbroking house said given the fact that Saleh had been working closely with Yahaya for a long time, it would not be difficult for him to carry on with Yahaya's legacy.

Saleh, she said, may have been in Yahaya's shadows despite putting in a lot of valuable input towards DRB-Hicom's success.

It was Saleh's turn to take the centre stage now under these special circumstances, she added. -- BERNAMA

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