

SAVING JOBS-:

Renong restructure to help thousands of people, says Dr M

By WAN HAMIDIHAMID

KUALA LUMPUR: The financial restructuring of Renong Bhd is meant to help thousands of its employees and should not be seen as the Government's attempt to rescue one person at the top, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Prime Minister said one should not think about Renong executive chairman Tan Sri Halim Saad alone because the Government would help any big company facing difficulty.

"If there is anything that we can do to help a big company like Renong, we should do it. One should not think about Halim alone.

"There are thousands and thousands of

people whose income will be affected if Renong collapses. There are lots of investors who will lose a lot of money.

"We are not rescuing one person. We have to do this for the good of the country," he told a press conference after launching *HeliAsia '98* here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on the financial restructuring of Renong, involving the issuance of Renong bonds backed by the Infrastructure Development Corporation (IDC), wholly-owned by the Finance Ministry.

Renong recently announced a debt restructuring exercise involving the issuing of RM10.5bil in government-backed bonds to repay the group's debts.

The move is said to ensure various national and strategic infrastructure projects

undertaken by the group would not be jeopardised and debts were paid.

On Malaysia-Singapore relations, Dr Mahathir said he did not know of any review in agreements, including military, between the two countries.

"As far as we are concerned, the (military) agreement is still on. I have not heard about a review" he said.

Singapore's media had expressed regret that Malaysia had pulled out of exercises under the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA) with Singapore, New Zealand, Australia and Britain.

Malaysia announced that the withdrawal was due to the economic crisis in the country and the region.

On claims of intrusion by Singapore's air

force into Malaysian air space, the Prime Minister said the Government would study the matter.

In his speech at the helicopter exhibition of civil and military operations, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia wanted to develop further its aerospace and aviation businesses.

However, he said, it would be done in a small scale by using foreign technology first.

"Every time we buy a helicopter, we will ask for an off-set programme in which we will acquire new technology," he said.

On his meeting with all the mentris besar at Sri Perdana on Monday night, the Prime Minister said: "It was nothing, just an exchange of information about what's happening on the ground."