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Dr M: We will help Renong if we have to

Nuraina Samad

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday if the Government could help a big company like Renong Bhd, it should because "thousands" of people would lose their incomes if the firm were to collapse.

Referring to the financial restructuring of Renong involving the issuance of Renong bonds backed by the Infrastructure Development Corporation (IDC), which is wholly-owned by the Finance Ministry, he said: "We are not rescuing one person. We have to do this for the good of the country. So, if we have to, we will help."

Dr Mahathir, who is also First Finance Minister, said this in reply to questions at a Press conference after opening the Heli-Asia '98 exhibition at the Mines international exhibition and convention centre in Seri Kembangan, Selangor.

"One should not think of Halim (Tan Sri Halim Saad) alone. There are thousands of people whose incomes will be affected if Renong collapses and there are a lot of investors who will lose a lot of money."

Halim is the executive chairman of Renong, a major infrastructure conglomerate which recently announced a complex debt restructuring exercise involving the issue of RM10.5 billion government-backed bonds.

The move is to ensure that various national and strategic infrastructure projects undertaken by the Renong group are not jeopardised and that debts will be paid.

Dr Mahathir had earlier said the Government was still studying Renong's proposed bond issue to restructure the group and that he had been given some information on it.

He also said the Government had not decided on whether or not to approve it.

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