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Shareholders must decide, says Dr M

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MALAYSIA will not agree to the staggered release of Malaysian shares previously traded on Singapore's Central Limit Order Book International (CLOB) market, if it is detrimental to the local stock market, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says.

The decision whether to release the shares, meanwhile, should be made by the shareholders themselves, he said at a press conference after the Umno Supreme Council meeting last night.

The Prime Minister was asked to comment on the move by the Stock Exchange of Singapore (SES) to submit a proposal to the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange (KLSE) for the staggered release of the shares which have been in limbo since Malaysia imposed selective capital controls last September. The SES has in turn asked the Securities Investors Association Singapore to withhold further action until it has explored its own plans with the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange.

"I think it is up to the shareholders to determine whether they want or not. I don't know about the SES... do they have control over these shareholders? If they have they can do whatever they like. But if it harms our share market we are not going to allow it," he said.

The SES proposal is the latest option following bids by three private parties to resolve the impasse over the shares, now worth RM14.5 billion, held by 172,000 investors.

"I think there have been too many proposals already. They say there is another proposal coming up, a fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, 10... It can go on ad infinitum," he said.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir said the Umno Supreme Council was briefed on the satisfactory performance of the economy, with positive signs indicating that growth can be achieved for the second quarter of 1999.

He said some areas which need to be improved and expedited include low-cost housing development and processing of land matters by state governments.

Asked about the opposition parties' refusal to join the Second National Economic Consultative Council (NECC-2), Dr Mahathir who is also Umno president said this shows that they have no sense of responsibility.

He said the opposition parties do not want to be tied to whatever decisions are made, so that later they can criticise them.

"This is the way of the opposition. There is no sense of responsibility. They only like to criticise," Dr Mahathir said.

He said the opposition claims that the Government is unfair for not seeking their views, but when they are invited to join discussions they refuse to attend. "There is some element of fear there," he added.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Umno vice president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi announced the expulsion of nine Umno members, including Tumpat division chief Datuk Kamaruddin Jaafar, for supporting or joining opposition parties.

Abdullah, who chairs the party's disciplinary and management committee, said the council also decided to send show-cause letters to six others for being sympathetic with the opposition.

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