

# Khalid dismisses Bernama, RTM privatization talks

By MALCOLM ROSARIO

DEPUTY Information minister Datuk Khalid Yunus yesterday poured cold water on talks in the market that the privatization of national news agency, Bernama, and Radio Televisyen Malaysia Bhd (RTM) was imminent.

Khalid dismissed suggestions of privatization plans for the two Government-owned concerns as the authorities view the entities vital to channel information to the public.

"In my view, the question of privatization does not arise," Khalid said, adding that existing plans are centred only on corporatising these agencies.

He insisted working plans to corporatise the agencies are ongoing but outside parties are welcome to explore the feasibility of taking over the agencies.

"For now, the Government is in favour of corporatising the entities," he told newsmen after launching My E-Trade Sdn Bhd's "Mytrade" website in Kuala Lumpur

But he left room for plenty of speculation when he added that privatization of the agencies would be possible if the Cabinet is for it.

He also confirmed that the Information Ministry has not received any proposal to privatize the two media-related agencies.

Khalid's statement has added more confusion in the market of the actual status of Bernama and RTM following reports by AFP that a proposal has been submitted to the Economic Planning Unit to privatize these entities.

"We have submitted a proposal to the EPU and are waiting for them to respond," AFP quoted Datuk Jalaluddin Bahauddin, a former special assistant to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Jalaluddin, together with Bernas group managing director Mohd Ibrahim Nor and former New Straits Times Press group editor-in-chief Datuk Kadir Jasin, are said to be the central figures in the takeover bid.