

PM: We had to check MAS' slide

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By FARID JAMALUDIN

KUALA LUMPUR: The Government will act against the previous MAS management should there be any proof that there was a criminal element leading to the huge losses it suffered then, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here yesterday.

The Prime Minister said the

Government was looking at MAS' previous decisions to determine what had led to its poor performance.

He said it was normal for the Government to carry out such checks on private companies it took over.

"If the problems were as a result of actions which were criminal in nature, then we will act against those respon-

sible," he told newsmen after launching the Multi-Purpose Government Smartcard at Iris Smart Technology Complex here.

However, he said no action would be taken against the previous management should investigations reveal that the slide in MAS was due to non-prudent actions or poor management.

"We decided that MAS was going down and we had to move in fast to check the fault or risk losing MAS altogether," he said.

"It is not that we like to pay someone such a huge sum of money. We had to make the decision to prevent MAS from deteriorating further," he added.

He said from a loss of

RM800mil in 1999, it went up to RM1.3bil last year.

Dr Mahathir also said that the recent takeover of Renong and UEM was not a move which should be seen as government interference.

"We have taken over many other ailing companies as well," he added.

Dr Mahathir also said that the smartcard, which was de-

veloped by Iris, was now ready for implementation nationwide.

He said with the card, people need not carry much cash anymore as everything would be contained in the card.

"A guarantee has been given by the authorities where security is concerned. There is no way the card can be tampered with."