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I will fulfil promise to hand over premiership, says Dr M

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he would fulfil his promise regarding the handing over of the premiership to Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"I will announce later, but I will fulfil my promise," he said.

Dr Mahathir was asked on whether there had been discussions on the matter, including the date for the succession of the premiership, at a press conference after launching the Heritage and National Culture Charter

here yesterday.

The PKR president was quoted in an interview with Bloomberg yesterday as saying that he would take over the premiership from Dr Mahathir around May next year. However, Anwar who is also Port Dickson member of parliament, said he was not sure on the exact date as it was agreed by Dr Mahathir.

Dr Mahathir said the government was willing to temporarily suspend the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) if China had done so fol-

lowing allegations that the project was connected to the 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) case.

He, however, said that until today, Malaysia had yet to receive confirmation from China on suggestions made by former member of the Council of Eminent Persons Professor Dr Jomo Kwame Sundaram recently.

"He (Jomo) needs to negotiate with China himself and tell me if they (Chinese government) can temporarily suspend the ECRL

project. (In any case) I am willing to follow suit.

"That was his own claim and so far the Chinese government has yet to confirm the matter.

"So far, Malaysia and China are willing to resume the ECRL project after both parties agreed to reduce the work scope and cost.

"So the project will resume."

Jomo had earlier suggested that the government suspend the ECRL project following the statement by a key witness in the ongoing 1MDB trial, Datuk Amhari

Efendi Nazaruddin, that the project was to bail out 1MDB.

Dr Mahathir said he also sought an explanation from Khazanah Nasional Bhd (Khazanah) on the suggestion that it would dispose of its stake in Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd to London-based airport management company VINCI, and Gatwick Airports, as reported recently.

He said Khazanah was scrutinising options to sell off assets which were "not useful" to pay off its debts.