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DPM: I did not brief PM on MAS

DEPUTY Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said he did not brief Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on the alleged conspiracy by certain quarters to discredit Malaysia Airlines chairman Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli.

Anwar was asked whether he had briefed Dr Mahathir on the conspiracy.

"No ... our concern is on the general services of all agencies and departments," he told reporters after chairing a meeting on the National Council for Local Authorities in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Last week, asked to comment on the state of public transportation, Anwar had said all public transport operators, including Malaysia Airlines, need to improve their services. He was quoted as saying that the public transportation situation left much to be desired.

The Malaysia Airlines' "problems" had been highlighted in the Berita Harian on January 18, and the national carrier remained in the news for much of last week until Dr Mahathir last Saturday said there seemed to be a plot to bring down Tajudin.

Dr Mahathir had said: "If there were really something that was not good, then we can (criticise) but if you make a campaign to put down Malaysia Airlines and make it look that its management has failed, then in that case we will have an airline that will fail."

Kang Siew Li reports: Asked to comment yesterday, Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik said recent reports on the national carrier's purportedly deteriorating services are expected to have an adverse effect on the country's tourism.

"It would turn potential passengers away from Malaysia Airlines," he told reporters in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, after performing the groundbreaking ceremony of the National Art Gallery new complex.

Sabbaruddin said Malaysia Airlines is expanding very fast, adding new destinations onto its existing routes. "As a result, the airline faces a shortage of aircraft, which leads to delays of flights," he said.

Of late, the airline has come under flak for poor and deteriorating services.

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