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Dr M: Stop putting down Malaysia Airlines

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THE campaign to expose problems in Malaysia Airlines could be a campaign to bring down company chairman Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who called for a halt in the criticisms.

"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," Dr Mahathir said.

Malaysia Airlines has come under flak for alleged deteriorating standards of service, including delayed flights, poor in-flight service and meals.

Asked if there appears to be a campaign to bring down Malaysia Airlines, Dr Mahathir said: "Sometimes there appears to be a campaign to throw out Tajudin Ramli."

On rumours that Tajudin wants to sell Malaysia Airlines, Dr Mahathir said these are just rumours made by people.

"I asked him myself, and he said he has no intention to sell, but there are people, perhaps those who are interested in buying, who have started a campaign to make it look like the airline is not being properly managed and should be sold.

"That is something normal that always happens - when there is someone whom we don't like, we publicise and smear his character. And when he steps down, we stop the criticism."

Dr Mahathir said the running of the airline should be left to the management as it is a private company, and all the Government can do is to advise the management.

Malaysia Airlines, he said, is now more efficient than before, as it is flying to many more destinations.

The overstretching of the airline, said Dr Mahathir, is partly due to the request of the Government for it to expand its network to places such as South Africa and Argentina.

Dr Mahathir said he is satisfied with Malaysia Airlines.

As for the shortage of manpower, he said this is because of the rapid expansion, coupled with the tight labour situation.

Asked if there is concern over Malaysians switching to the services of Singapore Airlines, Dr Mahathir said there is nothing wrong and it would be the first time Malaysians do so.

On Malaysia Airline's higher fares, he said "If so, go and use Singapore's and bankrupt our company."

He said criticism of Malaysia Airlines should stop, unless there is an intention to make it fold.

"It is like last year when there were two cases of cholera, we made such a noise that people stopped coming and Malaysia Airlines lost RM50m. Other countries have cholera all the time, it is endemic, but it's not put into the papers.

"If we do this to ourselves, we lose."

On alleged discrepancies in an award of a Telekom Malaysia Bhd contract, Dr Mahathir said it is being investigated. "It may take some time."

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