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PM: I don't expect Tabung Haji to buy Tajudin's MAS shares

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad does not expect Tabung Haji to purchase the stake Malaysia Airlines chairman Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli has in the carrier.

"No, I don't think they (Tabung Haji) are going to buy (Tajudin's stake)," the Prime Minister said when asked to confirm reports the agency may buy the stake if offered.

Explaining why he saw no possibility of Tabung Haji buying a substantial stake MAS, Dr Mahathir said the former "is not an airline operator".

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters after officiating at a national seminar on "Islamic development and the threat of deviant teachings" in Seri Kembangan, near here.

Last week, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Hamid Othman was quoted as saying Tabung Haji would consider the option, if offered, of holding a stake in MAS.

Tabung Haji once owned MAS shares but began disposing of its stake in 1989 when some depositors were dismayed to learn that liquor was being served on its flights.

Tajudin owns 47.71 per cent of Naluri Bhd, which in turn holds a 29.09 per cent stake in MAS.

Naluri is reported to be looking for buyers for all or part of its interest to raise cash to help pay off debts of more than RM1 billion.

Dr Mahathir also said Tabung Haji was also not going to buy aircraft to take pilgrims to Mecca as reported recently in a local Bahasa daily.

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