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Eight new faces join Tabung Haji investment panel

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Tabung Haji today named the eight new members of its investment panel comprising syariah law experts, accountants and corporate figures.

The new appointments are part of efforts to restructure Tabung Haji and help overcome its weaknesses.

Tabung Haji was recently embroiled in a controversy over allegations of fraudulent withdrawals of more than RM9 million from contributors as well as poor investments locally and abroad.

The appointments follow a statement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed earlier this month that Tabung Haji's investment panel would be revamped to help it become more professional.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin, said the organisation would also be introducing a new and safer withdrawal method system for its depositors. Details would be announced soon, he added.

Amanah Capital Partners Berhad managing director Datuk Seri Syed Anwar Jamalullail, who was appointed recently, heads the new panel.

The members are Syariah Judicial Department director-general Datuk Sheikh Ghazali Abdul Rahman, 63, Islamic Economic Development Foundation (YPEIM) director-general Dr Abdul Malek Awang Kecil, 44, and MBf Holdings Berhad executive director Azizan Abdul Rahman, 51.

The others are Amanah Capital Malaysia Bhd Corporate Services chief Abdul Wahid Omar, 37, (see CORRECTION above) Danaharta Nasional Berhad's Property Management director Mohamed Bakke Salleh, 47, and Yayasan Budi Penyayang Malaysia Trustee Datin Paduka Zahridah Ismail, 54, who is also Symphony Global Technologies Sdn Bhd director.

Also in the panel is To' Puan Dr Hayati Mohammad, 42, who is currently the Business Process team leader for the Human Resource Ministry's E-Government project.

The ninth member of the panel will be nominated by Bank Negara.

So far, Tabung Haji has confirmed the "disappearance" of RM 7.725 million from two depositors' accounts. The loss of another RM 1.4 million has yet to be confirmed.

Abdul Hamid, in his response recently, had said that there was no urgent need for ACA to investigate and that it was best that the matter be left to the police and the Audit Department.

On the new withdrawal method, Abdul Hamid said it was to help check fraud and irregularities.

"We are now in discussion with the National Registration Department and the Home Ministry on how to come out with an organised and safer method of deposit withdrawal," he said after receiving zakat contributions of RM4 million from eight companies today.

Abdul Hamid also denied allegations that certain quarters within Tabung Haji, including himself, were keeping certain information on the fraud from authorities.

"The whole matter is now under police investigation. I have not meddled in it ...

"There is no point in me keeping information under wraps. As I have said earlier, I am willing to provide any information needed," he said.

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