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Mahathir-MAS

GOVT WILL NOT NEGLECT WELFARE OF MAS WORKERS, PM ASSURES

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 1 (Bernama) -- The government, which has bought over 29.09 per cent of Naluri Berhad's stake in Malaysia Airlines (MAS), will put first the welfare of MAS staff, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

When privatising the national flag carrier, the government made it a pre-condition that none of the staff should be displaced unless they themselves chose to leave MAS, he said.

"We'll look after them. We've never let workers down," Dr Mahathir told reporters who approached him on the matter at the People's Progressive Party open house and new year reception at the Putra World Trade Centre here today.

Malaysia was unlike some other countries which absconded its obligations to workers upon a privatisation exercise on the excuse of cutting down on costs or improving efficiency, the prime minister said.

He was asked on the fate of MAS workers upon the government's re-purchase of the 29.09 per cent in MAS held by Naluri Berhad last Dec 20 at RM8 a share or for RM1.792 billion.

The prime minister was also asked who would replace Naluri's owner Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli as MAS executive chairman following the government's take over or Naluri's stake in the airline.

Dr Mahathir said he had no idea as the matter was being handled by Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin.

Citing Telekom Malaysia as an example, Dr Mahathir said the privatisation of several government agencies had so far been a success.

In fact, he said, Klang Container Terminal (KCT) and Northport workers have also requested for their entities to be privatised as they believed such a move would be better for them income-wise.

Dr Mahathir indicated that as for the next exercise, the government was mulling over privatising public transportation within Kuala Lumpur.

Despite government's assistance, companies operating public transportation in the capital city suffered losses because of high operating costs compared to cheap fares, he said.

Dr Mahathir hinted that restructuring of the city's public transportation may involve raising the fares.

-- BERNAMA

MHI ES RYN