

## **Prof: Tabung Haji should not be run by politicians**

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Pilgrimage fund Tabung Haji would not have got embroiled in a questionable land deal involving 1Malaysia Development Bhd had it not been controlled by politicians, an International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) professor says.

IIUM Academic Staff Association president Maszlee Malik said Umno's Baling MP Abdul Azeez Abdul Rahim (photo) should not have been appointed as chairperson of Tabung Haji.

"The Tabung Haji board's controversial purchase of land belonging to 1MDB, which is still being probed, is the result of the involvement of politicians in the highest administration of Tabung Haji.

"The appointment of politicians (such as Azeez) as Tabung Haji chairperson creates a conflict of interest in the administration of Tabung Haji," Maszlee said in a statement yesterday.

"Tabung Haji should instead be chaired by Islamic corporate figures who have proven their capabilities and have a long and well-recognised track record," he added.

Maszlee (photo) also called for a probe into the Tabung Haji-1MDB land deal and demanded that Azeez be replaced by a non-politician.

"Those involved in the (land) deal should be investigated, and if they have integrity, they should resign if this risky transaction had taken place.

"The chair of Tabung Haji should also be immediately replaced, with someone who is a non-politician, to regain contributors' confidence," he said.

Tabung Haji yesterday admitted to purchasing a plot of land owned by 1MDB at the Tun Razak Exchange (TRX) at a "discounted price" of RM188.5 million, or about RM2,779 per square foot (psf).

However, a blogger claimed that 1MDB made a killing from the sale, as it had purchased the government land for just RM90psf a few years ago.

According to reports from 2012, 1MDB purchased the land from the government at RM74.2psf.

### **Furore over 1MDB deal**

The land deal had caused furore among Muslim contributors to the pilgrimage fund.

Perlis mufti Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin (on the right) demanded answers, while PAS

vice-president Husam Musa called on Azeez to quit.

Citing Muslim scholars, Maszlee said it was not very Islamic for the pilgrimage fund, or any public institution, to be helmed by ruling party politicians or someone close to them.

"(Classical Muslim ulama) Ibn Taimiyah reminded those in power not to appoint an individual to positions involving public and Muslim interests based on family ties, friendship or even political leanings.

"Appointments via favouritism exclude those who are more qualified, and as such, Ibn Taimiyah said this was a betrayal to Allah, the Prophet (Muhammad) and the Muslims. This was said by (the second caliph) Omar, and even by the prophet himself," Maszlee said.

He also cited one of the founding fathers of modern sociology, Muslim ulama Ibn Khaldun, who wrote that politicians and leaders meddling in businesses leads to bad governance.

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