

Tabung Haji to gain small profit on TRX land sale

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By Radzi Razak

Lembaga Tabung Haji will gain a small profit when it sells the controversial 1.56-acre plot of land in Tun Razak Exchange (TRX) purchased from 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB).

Its chairperson Abdul Azeez Abdul Rahim said the pilgrims' fund is finalising the deal and the land buyer has been identified.

"We are now in the process of finalising the sale and purchase agreement and we will get a small profit," Azeez told reporters at Tabung Haji headquarters today.

Tabung Haji paid RM188.5 million or RM2,773 per square foot for the land 1MDB got from the government at a mere RM64 per square foot in 2011.

A blog posting on May 5 claimed that Tabung Haji had purchased two plots of land at 1MDB's Tun Razak Exchange (TRX) – one for RM194 million (at RM2,860 per square foot), and the other for RM578 million (or RM3,900 per square foot).

However, Tabung Haji in a statement issued the very next day, said it only bought one parcel of land, for RM188.5 million.

On May 9, Azeez said the board has agreed to sell the land it purchased to respect the sentiments and sensitivities of the fund's depositors and after a phone call from Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

'We did nothing wrong in buying land'

Najib is also finance minister and chairperson of the 1MDB Advisory Board.

However Azeez, who is also the Umno MP for Baling in Kedah, denied that Tabung Haji did anything wrong in buying the 1MDB land.

"The prime minister called me this morning and advised us to sell the land. There are three offers already and we will settle it next week.

"We can get back 100 percent of our money and even profit from it," Azeez had said then, after coming under much fire for the purchase of the land.

Today, after officiating at a car handing ceremony for the champions of the national Quran recital 2015, Azeez tried to dodge questions on the land.

Before the event began, he told members of the media to ask only about the prize-giving

ceremony and nothing else.

Azeez dashed back into the Tabung Haji compound after giving a short statement, saying he "will notify everything" about the land deals soon.

The controversial deal was slammed by former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad and it also prompted several Umno leaders, including the Umno Youth to grill both Azeez and Najib on the 1MDB land deals.

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