

Dr M: Why sell shares of profit-making MAHB to foreign firm?

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Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad has questioned the government's insistence on selling Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad (MAHB) to a US-based company which deals with the Israeli regime.

The veteran politician said he had initially thought it was because MAHB was in the red, however, he discovered that was far from the case.

“When I heard MAHB is planning to sell shares to an American company, I thought the former was making losses.

“Then I found out MAHB reaped RM543 million in profits last year. Not many companies make profits like this.

“Why sell 30 percent (of the shares) to an American company supporting Israel? I don't get it. Is there something brewing behind the scenes?” Mahathir asked on X.

On May 15, Khazanah Nasional Berhad announced that it was leading a consortium, Gateway Development Alliance (GDA), in a pre-conditional voluntary offer to acquire all the shares in MAHB not yet owned by the consortium at an offer price of RM11 per share.

The consortium's shareholders also comprise a joint venture between the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (Adia) and Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP) - through GIP Aurea Pte Ltd.

The pre-conditional offer stated that GIP Aurea would have a 30 percent effective economic interest in MAHB if the deal materialised. This would make GIP's effective stake in MAHB at 25 percent.

GIP's Israeli links

However, controversy erupted when it was found that Blackrock, a company deemed to have close ties with Israel, is in the midst of acquiring GIP.

The plan drew brickbats from various quarters including PKR MP Hassan Abdul Karim.

Khazanah defended the proposed deal, with its managing director Amirul Feisal Wan Zahir saying that the Blackrock takeover of GIP has yet to be finalised.

“To the best of my knowledge their deal has yet to be concluded,” Amirul told Bernama on May 26.

On June 4, Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Zafrul Abdul Aziz shot back at critics and stressed that Blackrock is a listed company not owned by Israelis, while sovereign wealth funds from Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar also have stakes in Blackrock’s shareholding.

He also highlighted that Blackrock is one of Apple’s largest shareholders.

“All of you who own Apple (products), if you really feel strongly, you shouldn’t be using them. Who is the biggest shareholder of WhatsApp? Who is the biggest shareholder of Facebook? Where do we draw the line?” Zafrul asked.

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