

Najib: I know nothing of the allegations

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Najib Razak (picture) said yesterday he knew nothing about businessman Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli's allegation that former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and former finance minister Tun Data Zainuddin had asked him to buy MAS shares in 1994.

The Deputy Prime Minister, however, said the Cabinet was informed of the buy-back of the shares by the Government in 2000.

Tajudin made the allegation in his RM13.46 billion counter-suit filed last Thursday against a RM589 million suit by Danaharta over his acquisition of 32 per cent of MAS shares in 1994 and selling them back to the Government for RM1.8 billion or RM8 a share in 2000.

According to Danaharta, Tajudin sold the shares at a premium of RM4.32 or 117 per cent over the market price of RM3.68 a share.

In his affidavit, Tajudin said he was directed to buy the MAS shares to help Bank Negara recover from foreign exchange losses in 1994.

"The buying back (of the MAS shares by the Government) was discussed (by the Cabinet). But the first part, we have no knowledge of that," Najib said, referring to the original purchase of MAS shares by Tajudin's company Naluri Berhad.

Speaking to reporters in Parliament House, *Najib* also denied any

thing arising from the purchase. He also claimed he was asked to keep the arrangement secret, and said he was revealing it now because the Government had not honoured the agreement.

Asked to comment on this, Najib said: "Whatever he (Tajudin) says, if there's an understanding, that I do not know. I cannot comment on that."

Public Accounts Committee chairman Datuk Shahrir Samad said the original deal had aroused some suspicion.

"There's no reason for anyone to borrow so much money just to buy the shares," Shahrir said.

"Now my suspicion is confirmed with Tajudin's affidavit. This is a matter for the court to decide."

Opposition leader Lim Kit Siang said Data had deceived Parliament and the nation when he allegedly made false claims in the Dewan Rakyat on March 21, 2001 over the RM1.8 billion buy-back of MAS shares by the Government.

He alleged that Data, as finance minister at the time, claimed that no special considerations were given to Tajudin in buying back the MAS shares from Naluri.

Lim also accused Data of giving the impression that

Tajudin had been reasonable in wanting to release his MAS stake to the Government at not less than RM15, and that there was a foreign investor interested in MAS at that price.

"This was most outrageous,"



...said yesterday that Tajudin's decision to pay RM8 per share had aroused some suspicions. "There was no reason for anyone to borrow so much money just to buy the shares. Now the suspicion is confirmed with Tan Sri Tajudin's affidavit," Shahrir said. "This is a matter for the courts to decide."

...But Tajudin says he was a victim rather than a beneficiary, because Nalaharta not only took over his companies but also sued him in May this year to recover RM1589 million that it claims he still owes the Government. He said he filed the counter-suit and revealed the secret deal with