

# Dr M: Jho Low stole and lost billions including 1MDB's RM42bil

PUTRAJAYA: We have evidence of fugitive Malaysian financier Low Taek Jho enriching himself unlawfully, says Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Low, popularly known as Jho Low, has gone into hiding and as such, the government is unable to recover much of the funds from the 1Malaysia Development Bhd scandal.

"There is still a lot of money missing," said the Prime Minister.

"The funds we have recovered is less than RM2bil.

"He stole and lost it all. 1MDB alone, he had taken RM42bil.

"Who got the money? Who is keeping the money?

"Where is the money? There is some evidence Jho Low has taken a lot of money for himself.

"We have problems trying to detect where he is but we are still after him," Dr Mahathir added.

Jho Low has been charged in Malaysia and the United States with playing a central role in the alleged theft of US\$4.5bil from 1MDB.

Low has consistently denied any wrongdoing through his spokesmen.

On another matter, the Prime Minister said no one came to him to change the new Johor Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia state chief.

The Bersatu national chairman said none of the Johor executive council members had approached him on the matter.

"The last time I saw the exco of Johor, they were not making any complaints," said Dr Mahathir over the issue of alleged unhappiness among certain Johor Bersatu leaders over the appointment of Mazlan Bujang, who replaced former menteri besar Datuk Osman Sapian as the Bersatu state chief.

Mazlan is the Tebrau Bersatu chairman and was an exco before he was dropped from the line-up by new Menteri Besar Datuk Dr Sahrudin Jamal.

At least 21 division chiefs had a special meeting at the Johor Baru Pribumi headquarters on Sunday to pledge their support for Dr Sahrudin.

On another issue, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia Airline's losses, coupled with bad management previously, made it difficult to turn it around.

"We have a problem with MAS.

"The last government gave it RM6bil, they sacked 6,000 people, then they don't fly to 60% of the destinations.

"There was no gain in what they tried to do," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government was still searching for the best solution for MAS, Malaysians best known flight carrier in the world.

Asked if the government would sell MAS, Dr Mahathir replied: "Sometimes, we think we might sell the airline. So many airlines have been sold to other people.

"Airline business now is very competitive, after the emergence of low-cost carriers. The high-cost carriers do not get passengers.

"Then, you have Arab airlines providing luxurious facilities. People cannot challenge this.

"We have yet to make a decision," said Dr Mahathir of MAS.

Experts believe that MAS may report about RM1bil in losses for full-year 2018 after incurring about RM2.4bil losses from 2015 to 2017, as the losses continue despite attempts to resuscitate the airline.

For its near-term sustainability, experts reckoned a RM1bil to RM3bil cash injection was needed.