

PM: Avoid past mistakes to uplift Malaysia Airlines

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SEPANG: Learn from past mistakes to avoid national air carrier Malaysia Airlines from being run to the ground, said Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The advice by the Prime Minister comes after he noted that poor management and lavish spending during previous turnaround attempts almost led to the airline's collapse.

"I saw this happening when I was former finance minister.

"The former treasury director-general told me that the airline was headed for disaster if things continued the way they were," he said at the launch of the MAB Academy Campus and groundbreaking for the Flight Simulation Centre here yesterday.

Although the airline was undergoing turnaround programmes, Anwar said that there was unne-

cessary spending on setting up large warehouses and offices.

"I witnessed how the airline was almost ruined when it was privatised in a haphazard manner," he said.

Anwar highlighted how the airline's employees were not paid their fair wages.

"What was the fault of the pilots, the stewards as well as the technical engineers?

"They served with excellence but were not given the salary they deserved," he added.

Anwar stressed that Malaysia Airlines must be managed properly in a transparent manner if it is to be profitable.

"Avoid leakages by looking at past experiences.

"Prove to the nation and people that we will be able raise the dignity of the airline in the global

arena if it is managed accordingly," he said.

He commended Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG) and Khazanah Nasional Bhd for turning the airline around to make it profitable.

In 1994, the airline, which was formerly known as MAS, was privatised and former MAS executive chairman Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli took a 32% majority stake in the airline.

However, it was bought back by the government following the 1997 Asian financial crisis at a cost of RM1.79bil.

The airline has undergone several turnaround programmes since 1997 and had been delisted before being taken over by sovereign wealth fund Khazanah Nasional Bhd.

About a third of the airline's

20,000-strong staff or 6,000 workers were laid off following restructuring exercises.

On the academy, Anwar said that emphasis must not only be on technical matters but also on how to regain the airline's status of having one of the most courteous flight crew.

MAG relocated its training centre in Kelana Jaya to the current 1.8ha site at the former Malaysia Airlines' headquarters in Sepang last December.

The academy has state-of-the-art facilities including its very own flight simulator centre and a swimming pool for safety and emergency training.

The former training centre in Kelana Jaya was launched by Anwar in May 1996, almost 28 years ago when he was the then Finance Minister.