

PM refutes claims that pro-Israel company will own MAHB shares

ASTANA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said claims that 25 per cent of the remaining shares of Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad (MAHB) would be owned by a pro-Zionist company were baseless.

He said the allegations raised by the opposition were merely aimed at inciting hatred towards the government.

"...there is nothing positive from them, only inciting hatred and envy.

"All of our statements that have been recognised by the world, including the meeting with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, do not bring anything positive to them, what is sought is slander and incitement.

"The strengthening of the ringgit and stock market only hurts the feelings of the opposition," he told a press conference on the last day of his two-day official visit to Kazakhstan here yesterday.

The opposition had claimed that plans to privatise MAHB via a consortium would include a company with links to a pro-Israel firm.

Meanwhile, Transport Minister

Anthony Loke Siew Fook said the government supported Khazanah Nasional Bhd's decision to privatise MAHB.

However, he said, this did not mean the government would sell its stake in MAHB to external parties.

Loke said the national asset manager, with the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), would form a consortium that would acquire a larger share in MAHB.

"That is a decision made by Khazanah. The Transport Ministry is only the regulator for MAHB. They decided to privatise MAHB, and we support Khazanah's move.

"As I said, we are not selling. There are claims saying the government is selling MAHB.

"The consortium that will be formed by Khazanah and EPF will acquire a larger share in MAHB.

"Currently, the government does not control the shareholding of MAHB because it's in the open market," he said in a press conference after chairing the National Logistics Task Force meeting yesterday.

Loke added that this decision



Transport Minister Anthony Loke Siew Fook speaking in a press conference after chairing the National Logistics Task Force meeting yesterday. PIC BY MOHD FADLI HAMZAH

was also expected to help in making strategic decisions for MAHB without going through the board's bureaucracy.

"After privatisation, Khazanah will form a consortium. The implementation of MAHB will be faster, and decisions will no longer need the endorsement of the board of directors.

"Previously, any decision had to consider differing views from the government. When taken private as a strategic asset, decisions

can be made quickly."

The minister also insisted that he did not deceive Parliament in March when he said an opposition lawmaker's claim about the planned deal to privatise MAHB was just an assumption.

He said he merely responded to the information presented by Machang member of parliament Wan Ahmad Fayhsal Wan Ahmad Kamal that MAHB was to be sold to Global Infrastructures Partners, a logistics investment fund

owned by one of the world's biggest asset managers, Blackrock, which he said was inaccurate.

"I stand by what I said, he said MAHB was going to be sold to GIP, which is not true, so I did not mislead Parliament."

On the proposed Kuala Lumpur-Singapore high-speed rail (HSR) project, Loke said discussions with the Singapore government would only take place after obtaining cabinet approval.

He said the ministry was waiting to present the proposal to the prime minister.

"The HSR proposal is still at the Transport Ministry level. We are awaiting the prime minister's approval first, after which it will be presented to the cabinet.

"I informed the Singapore transport minister (Chee Hong Tat) that there are ongoing discussions on our side. We will have official discussions after receiving cabinet approval."

On the essence of the discussion with Singapore's transport minister, Loke said they had touched on connectivity between the two countries and ongoing talks on airspace.