

I am not resigning, Azeez tells critics
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Lembaga Tabung Haji chairman Datuk Seri Abdul Azeez Abdul Rahim said he will not bow down to pressure demanding for his resignation over the controversy surrounding the purchase of a land from 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB).

He said, in a Sinar Harian report today, that over the past two days the issue has been highly politicised by certain quarters.

"I have been keeping quiet to see the reaction. I waited because I wanted to find out what was being played up... It turns out to be political.

"And they try to link this (issue) to me, as the chairman of TH. What is the connection? If I had made TH to suffer losses, then they can ask me to step down," he said in the Malay daily.

Azeez also reminded critics that he was appointed to the post and he had proven his credibility as reflected in the increase of dividends to TH depositors.

"Before, the dividend was 5.5%. Praise Be to God, coincidentally when I became the chairman and other colleagues in the board, we paid 6% (annual bonus), plus 2% (haj bonus), which equals to 8% in 2013.

"Last year, it was 6.25% (annual bonus) and 2% (haj bonus) which is 8.25%," Azeez was reported as saying.

He also urged all quarters not avoid mixing the pilgrims' fund with politics.

Meanwhile, Tanjung Lumpur assemblyman Rosli Jabar said the transaction between TH and TRX should not have happened in the first place as it raises doubt among the depositors and could potentially tarnish the fund's image.

"We see many people are starting to withdraw their savings after the exposure and sharing them on the social media.

"This shows that people are worried and have lost their trust in Tabung Haji," Sinar Harian quoted him as saying and reminded that Muslims had entrusted Tabung Haji to manage their funds so that they could perform their haj to Mecca.

Beserah assemblyman Andansura Rabu questioned Tabung Haji's rationale in the land purchase, saying that the price of RM188.5 million for a half an acre of land was unreasonable.

"To me, it is expensive. So people were unhappy about it. Even if it was a business strategy, they could have bought it straight from the government," he said.

A blog called "The Benchmark" on May 5 leaked documents that detailed Tabung Haji's plans to buy two plots of land from 1MDB at the site of the Tun Razak Exchange (TRX) project.

Tabung Haji subsequently confirmed its RM188.5 million purchase for one of the two plots, a 0.63ha piece of land, drawing outcry from fund depositors and political leaders from both sides of the divide, given that 1MDB is known to be sitting on RM42 billion in debt. – May 10, 2015.

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