

## **Certain parties keen to purchase MAS, says Mahathir**

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KUALA LUMPUR, March 20 (Bernama) -- Certain parties in the country and abroad are interested to purchase the national carrier Malaysia Airlines Berhad (MAB), Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said, however, that the government still wants to make a study before making the decision to sell the airline. MAB is branded as Malaysia Airlines.

“Certain parties are keen to purchase MAS, and we are not rejecting the offers. We want to study whether we need to sell (the airline) or not. Even when we appoint managers from abroad, MAS has continued to suffer losses,” he told a press conference at the Parliament lobby. MAS is the acronym for Malaysia Airlines.

When asked about the suggestion by former Malaysia Airlines management teams that the airline should remain under the government, Dr Mahathir said the proposal will also be considered.

“I love MAS. I want MAS to be the national airline but it looks as if we cannot afford it,” he said.

Dr Mahathir said the previous government’s strategy of providing a RM6-billion allocation to Malaysia Airlines and retrenching 6,000 of its employees did not bring profits and left many aircraft not fully utilised.

“After dismissing 6,000 employees, MAS was not flying as it used to, meaning the staff reduction did not make a difference. If we reduce the number of staff and maintain the previous status, then there will be savings,” he said.

It was reported on March 5 that Khazanah Nasional, the government's investment wing, suffered a RM7.3-billion depreciation last year, largely contributed by Malaysia Airlines.

Khazanah is Malaysia Airlines' only shareholder after having taken over the airline in 2014 and it injected RM6 billion to improve the performance of the airline but failed.

Dr Mahathir said last week that the government is considering various options -- shut, sell or refinance -- before making the final decision on the future of Malaysia Airlines.

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