



Megat Najmuddin sees no value in taking its firms private

Group dismisses privatisation talk

THE Tradewinds group yesterday dismissed as "pure speculation" a recent report saying it was heading towards privatisation.

Its chairman Datuk Seri Megat Najmudin Megat Khas said there were no plans to take private either Tradewinds (M) Bhd, Tradewinds Corp Bhd or Tradewinds Plantation Bhd.

"It's pure speculation and we've been queried by the stock exchange almost every other day.

"You've to look at it logically. There's no value in taking private either of the three publicly-traded Tradewinds companies," he told reporters after the company's shareholder meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

"There are no cash piles (in either of the three companies), only debts. So, there's no value in privatisation.

"If there had been plans to privatise, it would just add

on to the debt," he said.

"Our priority is to pare down debts. We can't just keep on working for the bank. We'd like to work for ourselves."

Megat Najmudin said that slightly more than three years ago, the group's debt was RM2.6 billion. Now, it is RM2.1 billion, he said.

He added that of the total group debt of RM2.1 billion, the hotel division's debt is RM1.1 billion. "One of the reasons we want to sell the Hanoi hotel is to reduce debts," Megat Najmudin said.

Besides the hotel in Vietnam, Tradewinds manages 10 hotels in Malaysia. Those in the Klang Valley include the Crowne Plaza Mutiara Kuala Lumpur, Hotel Istana, Hilton Petaling Jaya and Mutiara Johor Baru.

"We own eight of the 10 hotels that we manage in Malaysia," Megat Najmudin added.