

R GE 06-04 00175 EA801

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MAHATHIR SAYS KL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT STILL FUNCTIONAL
Mahathir-fire

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KUALA LUMPUR, April 6 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the Kuala Lumpur International Airport at Subang near here is still functional and should be re-opened in a matter of hours.

Speaking to newsmen at the scene, the Prime Minister said what was important was that the main airport terminal and north wing were not affected by the fire which started at about 2.50am.

Dr Mahathir, who was briefed by airport officials earlier, said the fire started at the chocolate shop in the duty-free shop area in the south wing.

Most of the shops facing the road were destroyed by the blaze while those facing the runway were not.

He said the sprinkler system did not work effectively because the goods were stacked high up in the back portion of the shops. Water from the sprinklers could not reach the goods at the bottom of the stacks. -- Bernama

▼06/04/12-25MST

U GE 06-04 00205 EA802

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R UG 06-04 00229 EA812

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Attn editors: In item slugged +Mahathir-fire 2 KL+, para 7 should read Selangor MB Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib+

Here corrected rptn

Mahathir-fire 2 Kuala Lumpur

There are about 30 duty-free shops at the airport.

Describing the three security guards of the Department of Civil Aviation who were killed as +unfortunate+, Dr Mahathir said they were probably suffocated by the thick smoke and could not escape.

Their bodies had been recovered and sent to the Universiti Hospital for a post-mortem.

Dr Mahathir said firemen had a hard time getting to the blaze because the thick laminated glass panels of the south wing, which came into operation in October 1989, were difficult to break.

He said the fire spread quickly through the ceilings, which melted in the heat.

Dr Mahathir also said he was at the airport early this morning to send off the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Sultan Azlan Shah, and the Raja Permaisuri Agong, Tuanku Bainun, who left after midnight for London, en route to Vienna for an official visit.

The Prime Minister was at the scene of the fire together with Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Megat Junid Megat Ayob and Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib. -- Bernama

▼06/04/14-08MST