

PM to ask about stoppage of trainee pilot loans

LANGKAWI, Sun. — Mara will be asked by ~~Datuk Seri~~ Dr Mahathir Mohamad why it had stopped awarding loans and scholarships to trainee pilots.

The Prime Minister said today that at one time Mara did give out such facilities but had now stopped doing so.

"I will ask them why they have stopped giving the facilities," he told reporters after a visit to the resort island to check on the progress of development projects particularly for Lima '93 currently under way.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on the grievances

of trainee pilots in their inability to get scholarships to complete their training to earn the commercial pilot licence.

The trainees' grievances were aired by Mofaz Air Sdn Bhd managing director Lt-Kol (R) Mohd Affendi Mustapha to reporters when Dr Mahathir visited the Mofaz Pilot Training School (MPTS).

Affendi said despite a comprehensive report on the excellent prospects for a career pilot, he was disappointed to learn that Mara did not give loans or scholarships despite spending much more for students of

other disciplines.

He said with new flight routes undertaken by Malaysia Airlines there would be a demand for 256 to 300 new commercial pilots annually.

At the MPTS, Mofaz charges \$113,606 for the 14-month training of pilots — very much lower than those charged by foreign pilot training schools.

He said at the MPTS all training was in accordance with standards imposed by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).

Affendi said the country would gain substantially in foreign exchange if they

send pilots here for training as they would eventually be able to replace the 366 foreign pilots now hired by

In the meantime, MAS has already committed 16 trainee pilots for training at MPTS.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir took a 30-minute ride on a Schweizer-300 C three-seater helicopter and toured the island.

He said what he saw from the air pleased him.

"From the Delima Resort coastline to Bukit Raya I saw a lot of greenery and undergrowth where there once was erosion."