

CNS3495

R GE 18-08 00201 EA768

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requested rptn for Reuters

Mahathir-fire

MAHATHIR REITERATES NEED TO PREVENT FIRES AT KLAP

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JITRA, Aug. 18 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today reiterated the need for all concerned to give attention to fire-prevention measures at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

"We have experienced this time and again. By right they should learn from that to avoid a recurrence," he said.

He said if it was found that a short circuit could cause a fire, the parties concerned must ensure that the wiring and related factors did not cause a short circuit.

Frequent inspections should be carried out to ensure that the incident did not recur, he said when commenting on the fire which destroyed the approach radar station at Bukit Subang last Saturday.

He told reporters who approached him after he officially opened the new Jitra public library building here: "If we know that the first fire was caused by a short circuit, we must ensure that short circuits do not recur and even if it was caused by sabotage, we must have ways of preventing sabotage." -- more

KHY LDB

▼18/08/20-25MST

CNS3443

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Mahathir-fire 2 Jitra

"We must have positive maintenance, not passive maintenance. We must act early. Although the cost will be high, I believe it would still be cheaper than to allow such fires to occur.

"Although we can insure the equipment, there is no insurance against flight delays and other problems."

He said heads could roll but if the could not care less attitude prevailed the same thing would recur even if the person who was the head was replaced.

Dr Mahathir said the government was unhappy about the fire because while everyone clamoured for sophisticated equipment and nice buildings, it seemed that they were less than capable of manning the facilities.

"By right fire safety must be given due attention before and not after it occurred. We not only want to safeguard lives but he must prevent a fire from ever happening," he added.

He said there were many ways to prevent fires, like carrying out checks every six months or a year instead of making a cursory inspection. -- more

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▼18/08/19-36MST

CNS3462

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Mahathir-fire 3 Jitra

"We know that in our country lightning, storms and such... we must know what measures we should take," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the government was interested to know what the fire alarm did not go off in Saturday's fire, whether it was faulty or whether the installation was improperly done.

Asked about the suggestion of a cover-up of the fire by certain quarters, he said: "I feel sad because I should have been informed when it occurred. When the first fire occurred, I was informed and I went to see the situation at the airport but this time I read it from the newspapers... I don't know if there was a cover-up or not but the fact is I got the information so late when the matter was a major one.

Asked whether the government would set up a Cabinet committee to investigate the fire, he said no matter how often a committee was set up to conduct an investigation, if the habit of neglecting to look after the facilities persisted, the same thing would recur. -- more

KHY LDB

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Mahathir-fire 4 (last) Jitra

He said the incident had blemished the country's image and everyone must take the responsibility to see that it did not recur.

Asked whether it would cost the government more expenditure, he said: "Yes, we will be spending more... for sure it will be the latest, the most sophisticated and the most expensive but if we are unable to look after it, what can be done."

He hoped it would not take too long to replace the radar so that the situation at the airport could be returned to normal.

He said: "What can we do... no matter how quickly we can get the radar, in the meantime we are faced with the lack of a radar.

"Although we have a back up, by having to resort to it is an admission that we are inefficient." -- Bernama

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♥18/08/20-02MST