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Mahathir-Reports

AIRPORT FIRE SHOULD BE MADE PUBLIC, SAYS PM

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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said last week's fire at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Subang which disabled the approach radar system should not be covered up.

"We should report it...we cannot hide anything," he told reporters after watching an air show put up by the United States Air Force Thunderbirds squadron here today.

Dr Mahathir was asked about a statement by the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) that media reports on the Aug 13 fire could harm the image of the country.

Asked on his comment that incompetency led to the fire, he said the process of establishing a quality public service required a long time because people's attitude could not be changed easily.

On the air show, he said it should inspire Malaysians to learn to fly sophisticated aircraft like foreigners. -- more

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Dr Mahathir said the development of an aerospace industry in Malaysia needed the acquisition of broad skills.

"The technology in the industry is progressing rapidly and when we reach a certain level, we find others are far ahead. The West is so far in front that it is difficult to set a timeframe for us to catch up," he said.

-- Bernama

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Meanwhile, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the fire should not have been "covered up".

"We agree that we should not hide and cannot hide because as soon as the fire happened, Malaysia Airlines (MAS) and the others have to be informed.

"No way can you keep it a secret...you must tell," he told reporters at the DCA Air Traffic Complex in Subang today.

He said immediate action would have to be taken to rectify the situation.

The minister said he had apologised to Dr Mahathir for the "oversight" in not reporting the fire to him much earlier.

Dr Ling said he had made it a policy "all along" that the DCA director-general should inform the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister on whatever "major things" which happened at the airport.

The minister also said he has been keeping Dr Mahathir informed about the latest developments at the airport including the offer by Thomson CSF to replace the damaged components of the radar at no cost.

He added that he would also brief the Cabinet on the latest developments at its weekly meeting on Wednesday. -- Bernama

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