

PM hopes offer won't lead to allegations

By Syed Nadzri

PETALING JAYA, Sun. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today hoped that the offer by a French company to supply free radar parts to replace those damaged at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport will not lead to another round of charges of corruption against the Malaysian Government.

The Prime Minister could not say whether he was comfortable with the offer although he added that the Government should be thankful for the gesture.

He said this in response to reporters' questions after watching an aerial demonstration by the *Thunderbirds*, the United States Air Force aerobatics team at the RMAF base here this afternoon.

Dr Mahathir was asked whether he was comfortable with the offer by Thomson CSF to supply between RM7 million and RM8 million worth of parts to replace the damaged components of the terminal approach radar at no cost to the Government.

He replied: "I don't know. Well, I suppose I must say thank you for the offer."

To another question whether this would give rise to allegations of corruption, especially by the foreign media, against the Government, the Prime Minister added:

"I hope not. The best thing is for others to offer for free also."

The RM15.6 million radar was knocked out by a fire at its control station at Bukit Subang last Saturday night. It destroyed the radar's nerve centre.

Yesterday, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the French manufacturer Thomson CSF will send its engineers on Sept 9 with the replacement parts for the destroyed equipment, which would be installed within two days.

Thomson CSF's offer to replace the components would also make unnecessary the Cabinet's earlier decision to buy a mobile radar on a fast track procurement system.

Dr Mahathir asked to comment on Opposition leader Lim Kit Siang's call for Dr Ling to resign because of the fire which is the third in two years at the airport.

"It is easy for him (Lim) to say because he does not have much responsibility," he said.

Asked to comment on a Department of Civil Aviation's statement that a report on the fire may damage

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There must be no cover-up, says Dr Mahathir

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Malaysia's credibility. Dr Mahathir said a full report must be submitted and nothing should be covered up.

"We should report it ... we

cannot hide anything."

Dr Mahathir was among the thousands of spectators who turned up to watch the display by the USAF's six F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft -- reputed to be one of the world's best aerobatic

teams.

However, because of hazy conditions and bad visibility, the display was cancelled after 20 minutes.

"We could not really see the aircraft. It is unfortunate that it had to be called

off," he added.

The Prime Minister climbed aboard the aircraft to have a closer look and was briefed by Lt-Col Stephen Andersen, the leader of the USAF air demonstration team.