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Mahathir-Blackout

DR MAHATHIR SADDENED AND EMBARRASSED BY BLACKOUT

ALOR SETAR, Aug 4 ( Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he regretted yesterday's massive power failure because lessons should have been learnt from a similar incident in 1992.

"I am sad that it has happened again when we should have learnt from our previous experience," he said.

It was embarrassing that such a thing could happen to a country that was a model to other developing nations, he told a press conference after attending the Kubang Pasu Umno division delegates meeting in Jitra, near here.

"Where are we going to put our faces? We invite people to come and invest but such a thing happened and caused disruptions to their factories," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he failed to understand why power failures occurred in Malaysia when other countries which consumed more electricity did not have such a problem.

Power supply to the whole of peninsular Malaysia was disrupted from 5.17pm yesterday due to a fault at the Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) power station in Paka in Terengganu, and the cascading effect of the line tripping automatically shut down the other power stations.

The power failure brought daily activities to a virtual standstill and caused massive traffic jams in major towns. Electricity supply was only restored in stages several hours later.

Dr Mahathir said TNB had given an assurance that the electricity supply system was in good condition following the 1992 incident, the last major blackout prior to yesterday's failure.

Since the first incident, the government had taken steps to award licences to Independent Power Producers (IPPs) and total electricity output had increased by 50 percent.

"It happened once before but we let it happen again...I don't know, maybe they have technical problems which I don't understand," he said.

"We can gauge our electricity needs, and the possibility of a breakdown when there is too much current flow. I do not believe that the blackout can simply happen without a fault," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he had yet to receive a full report on the incident.

He said Energy, Telecommunications and Post Minister Datuk Leo Moggie had told him that the situation was worse than expected and the restoration process would take time.

Asked on the losses suffered, Dr Mahathir said: "I would not dare to say...definitely substantial. Industries depend on electricity, hotels too depend on electricity."

He said the Cabinet would discuss the matter and the measures that the government should take. -- BERNAMA

MZM ZAA YBY