

02 MAR 1997

Plane-Crash

CESSNA AIRCRAFT CRASHES, THREE DIE

LANGKAWI, March 2 (Bernama) -- Three people were killed when their chartered Cessna 172 light aircraft belonging to Mofaz Air crashed into a mangrove swamp in Kampung Bakau, Kelibang, here today.

Langkawi OCPD Supt Wan Ali Abu Shahmah said the dead were Filem Negara Malaysia cameramen Abdul Razak Md Nor, 43, and Ishak Latif, 32, and pilot Nik Alfian Nik Abdul Ghani, 26.

The ill-fated aircraft chartered by Filem Negara was carrying the two cameramen who were covering the last leg of the Le Tour de Langkawi cycling championship when it crashed at 3.45pm, he told newsmen at Langkawi Hospital here.

The tragedy occurred barely 15 minutes after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had flagged off the racers in front of the Lada Complex.

Abdul Razak and Ishak were from Kuala Lumpur while Nik Alfian was from Kota Bharu, Kelantan. They were involved in the aerial filming of the race since the event started in Kota Kinabalu.

Meanwhile, an eyewitness, Isaudin Ani, 25, said he was watering his plants in the compound when the tragedy struck.

"I saw the aircraft wobbling in the air...the engine stuttering.

"It then turned towards Kuah but flew just above a coconut tree before crashing into a mangrove swamp about 30 metres from my house," said Isaudin, a hotel staff in Kuah.

He said that he ran towards the scene of the accident which was about 500 metres from Jalan Kelibang and found three people inside the aircraft.

Isaudin, who was the first to arrive at the scene, said he noticed one of the victims signalling for help while the other two seemed lifeless.

"I tried to open the aircraft door but it was stuck. I then assured the victim that I would seek help," he added.

Another witness, Mohamad Abdullah, said he was driving home when he saw the aircraft nosedive and crash into the swamp.

"Sensing something amiss, I stopped my car and rushed to the scene and found the three victims still in the crashed plane," he said.

He said he helped police to carry out Abdul Razak who was still alive but who later died while being flown in a helicopter to Langkawi Hospital.

Wan Ali said Ishak and Nik Alfian died at the scene.

Firemen, the police and Department of Civil Aviation personnel were involved in the rescue operation, he said.

The crash was the second involving Cessna aircraft belonging to Mofaz Air in Langkawi. The first occurred last year when a Cessna crashed in Kampung Nyior Cabang here but the pilot escaped death.

Meanwhile, Langkawi Deputy OCPD, DSP Ahmad Ibrahim, said an investigation team would be formed to ascertain the cause of the crash. --
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