

14/08/1997

Copter crash probe team rules out mechanical faults

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INVESTIGATORS of the May 2 helicopter crash, which killed Tan Sri Yahaya Ahmad, his wife and pilot, have ruled out mechanical or engineering faults as the cause of the crash, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik announced yesterday.

The investigation team, comprising officials from Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau of England and the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA), has submitted a preliminary report on the helicopter crash.

Yahaya, who was the chairman and chief executive officer, his wife Puan Sri Rohana Othman and helicopter pilot Major (R) Azlizan Abdul Manas were killed when the Agusta 109 P helicopter they were flying in crashed near Kuala Lipis, Pahang.

"Whatever findings so far seem to reveal that there are no mechanical faults nor engineering problems as the cause of the crash so they (the investigators) will have to look elsewhere for the cause of the crash," he told reporters in Kuala Lumpur yesterday after the weekly Cabinet meeting.

Asked on the possibility that the helicopter was sabotaged as investigators had ruled out mechanical fault, Dr Ling said: "There are no such elements pointing to that."

The minister said the report made no mention of alien objects found in the helicopter and he dismissed suggestions that the helicopter was tampered with.

"Investigations are still ongoing with the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau of England, which are the world's leaders in such matters," he said.

The UK-based bureau is the independent body called in to oversee the probe into the cause of the accident. They have been assisting the DCA.

Dr Ling said he had not set any deadline for the team to come up with a full report because he wants them to take all the time necessary to do a thorough investigation.

"It is no use pushing them to come up with something in two weeks, if they need longer time," he said.

He added the Cabinet has yet to see the preliminary report and that he will submit the full report when it is ready.

When asked if the full report will be made public, he said: "Let the Cabinet decide if the report should be made public or not."

On the rules pertaining to experimental aircraft, Dr Ling said the DCA will look into how these regulations can be relaxed to encourage the flying culture among Malaysians.

He stressed, however, that relaxation should not compromise safety aspects.

In a few developing countries, the rules for experimental aircraft are more relaxed to encourage more aviation enthusiasts to enter the fields of flying, building, designing and maintaining experimental aircraft.

He said flying is very popular, but more people should go further and deeper into the technical aspects like designing, building and maintaining the aircraft.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in his opening speech at the first Langkawi Oshkosh East Fly-In Convention and Exhibition held from August 4 to 8, had called for Malaysians to venture beyond just flying and to indulge in the understanding of aircraft mechanics as well.

Organised by Le Proton Lima Sdn Bhd, it was aimed at stimulating an

interest in flying among the younger generation and cultivating an aviation culture in the future generation.

Dr Ling said the Malaysian Experimental Aircraft Association and the various flying clubs were looking into the ways in which the tough rules could be relaxed.

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