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Ling: Sabah copter crash attributed to clogged fuel jet

Rashid Yusof

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Investigators discovered that the Sabah Air helicopter crash in 1995, which killed 10 people, was caused by granular material or foreign objects clogging one of its fuel jets, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said today.

This had resulted in a loss of power and general malfunction.

The 412 Bell helicopter carrying seven Petronas Carigali Sdn Bhd employees and a Filipino contract worker to the Semarang oil platform off Sabah went missing over the South China Sea on Nov 29, 1995.

Its wreckage was later found near Pulau Tiga while only six bodies were recovered. The pilot and co-pilot were also killed.

Dr Ling said the Cabinet at its weekly meeting today accepted this finding by a Department of Aviation team which was assisted by experts from the National Transport Safety Board of the United States and Britain's Aviation Accident Investigation Bureau.

The Cabinet also agreed that the finding be made public, and Dr Ling said it would be available in about two weeks' time. He was speaking after attending the Cabinet meeting.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Syed Albar had told Parliament in July last year, in reply to a question from Parti Bersatu Sabah president Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan, that there was no proof to support claims that the helicopter was downed by a Royal Malaysian Navy vessel.

On the misunderstanding involving him and Malaysia Airlines employees over some remarks he made, Dr Ling said the matter was now in the hands of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and that he was happy with the sentiments expressed by his Cabinet colleagues.

He added that a Transport Ministry study found that special lanes for high occupancy vehicles should not be introduced in the Federal capital now when the integrated public transport system has not been fully completed.

He said that the special lanes might be more feasible when the Light Rail Transit, KTM Komuter and monorail were in place and the number of vehicles in Kuala Lumpur had been brought down to a manageable level. The lanes were suggested to ease traffic congestion by getting more people to car-pool.

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