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Mahathir-flights

MAHATHIR TO AVIATION INDUSTRY: INSTIL "MAINTENANCE CULTURE"

KUALA LUMPUR, July 28 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has urged the local aviation industry and flying clubs to help nurture a "culture of maintenance" among Malaysians at all levels to protect lives and investments.

Describing an aircraft as an "unforgiving" machine requiring thorough mechanical maintenance in particular, Dr Mahathir said lacking in maintenance culture would only bring disastrous and fatal outcome.

"The aircraft is not that forgiving. If we don't know how to maintain and maintain well, accidents will occur," he said when simultaneously launching three flight-related programmes at the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) base in Sungai Besi here.

They were the "Great Malaysian Air Rally", the Rakan Muda experimental aircraft and the RMAF museum's homepage.

He said in their zeal to be dynamic, the local aviation industry and mushrooming flying clubs should put first the costly investments and the invaluable human lives.

He said if the RMAF, for example, ignored precision maintenance, the vast sums spent on the MiG-29 and the F/A-18D Hornet sophisticated fighter aircraft would be wasteful and lives of pilots be endangered too.

"These aircraft are expensive. We can only afford a few of them. If we don't maintain them well, they'll age. If something were to happen there will loss of lives and investments," he said.

Dr Mahathir said during a recent visit, which involved landing at a Royal Air Force base in England, he marvelled at the mint condition and airworthiness of aircraft that Britain had used in World War Two and built in the 1950s and 1960s.

This was because the British knew how to maintain the aircraft mechanical parts, he said.

In this context, Dr Mahathir said there was the need to instil a maintenance culture among Malaysians keen in taking up flying.

"To us, those aircraft are only for the scrapyard. In our case, even our new aircraft are regarded old," he said.

Dr Mahathir said a maintenance culture inherent among Malaysians would augur well for the country's future advancement in the aerospace industry.

At today's function he launched the first experimental aircraft built under the Rakan Muda recreational programme and flagged off 20 light aircraft taking part in the eight-day "Great Malaysian Air Rally".

The rally, in conjunction with the "Langkawi Fly-In Oshkosh East" convention and exhibition, would end on Aug 4 in Langkawi after stop-overs in Melaka, Kuala Terengganu, Ipoh and Alor Setar.

The prime minister then toured the air force museum and launched its homepage.

Established in 1985, the museum is the country's first museum with its own web-site. -- Bernama

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