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Ling-MAS

MAS-HAZE ISSUE IS NOW IN PRIME MINISTER'S HANDS

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 15 (Bernama) -- At a time when Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is bogged down with the country's economic problems, another task has been entrusted upon him, that of "clearing the air" over the issue of Malaysia Airlines' treatment of its passengers, particularly during the recent haze.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the Cabinet, at its weekly meeting today, decided to leave the MAS-haze issue in the hands of the prime minister.

"I had the chance to report to the Cabinet on the events following my advice to Malaysia Airlines to take better care of its passengers amid flight delays and cancellations due to the haze," he told reporters at his office, here.

Although he did not mention the "events", Dr Ling was obviously referring to the protest by some 800 employees of the airline on Tuesday who were angered by his remarks on the airline. This was followed by a meeting between the employees representatives and Dr Ling.

Last week, Dr Ling said the Cabinet had received many reports that the people had been inconvenienced, with some passengers being kept in the dark about their flights and having to wait for hours without refreshments.

However, the airline management clarified that it had taken various initiatives to ensure smooth operation without jeopardising the safety of the passengers and aircraft and with the passengers convenience in mind.

Even MAS executive chairman, Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli, had described Dr Ling's comments as "disparaging", in an Oct 9 circular to his staff.

Dr Ling refused to comment further on the matter, saying that the airline workers should "walk that extra mile" at a time when the country was facing difficult times.

He said the cabinet had discussed the matter but "we decided to leave this matter in the hands of the prime minister."

Asked whether he would stand by his statement on MAS, he said there was no need for him to do that because the statement was made on record and on the Cabinet's instruction.

Asked whether he was willing to meet the MAS management, he said: "my door is always open." -- BERNAMA

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