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Pilot, two cameramen filming Langkawi race die in plane crash

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LANGKAWI, Sun. - A Cessna 172 crashed, killing the pilot and two Filem Negara cameramen, in Kelebang, about 5km from Kuah town this afternoon.

The two cameramen Ismail Latif and Razak Mohd Noor, both 35, were filming the final lap of the Le Tour de Langkawi international bicycle race in the Mofaz Air aircraft when the incident occurred about 3.40pm.

The pilot was Kapt Nik Alfian Abdul Ghani, 26.

Both Ismail and Nik Alfian were reported to have died at the scene while Razak died onboard a police helicopter which was transporting him to the Langkawi district hospital a short distance away from the accident site.

All the three victims were said to have been pinned to their seats when the light aircraft nose-dived into the mangrove swamp about 300 metres from the Kuah Straits.

The Department of Civil Aviation was reported to have set up a committee to investigate the cause of the crash.

Although Mofaz Air has recently closed its training academy in Langkawi, it continues to maintain its charter services.

An eye-witness, Mohammad Abdullah, who is the chief executive of the Langkawi Helicopter Services, said the Cessna nose-dived straight into the swamp without gliding.

He said he was driving near the scene of the crash when he saw the aircraft plunge.

"I stopped my car and rushed to the scene to prevent people who had gathered from going near the spot as I was afraid it would explode," he added.

He added that the cameramen and the pilot were trapped in their seats with serious injuries.

Earlier, newsmen covering the cycling event, which was witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, had seen the plane flying very low over the Langkawi Development Authority complex which was the flag-off point for the cycling event.

Deputy Langkawi police chief Assistant Superintendent Ahmad Ibrahim said police were informed about the crash at 3.45pm.

"We immediately despatched our helicopter, which was flying at the time in conjunction with the Tour De Langkawi, to the scene," he said.

"It reached the scene within five minutes and rushed Razak, who was still alive, to the Langkawi Hospital," he added.

Firemen also assisted the police in extricating the remains.

The next-of-kin of both the cameramen are from Kuala Lumpur.

The other Filem Negara colleagues were grief-stricken when met at the Langkawi district hospital mortuary as they had filmed the Le Tour De Langkawi event with Ismail and Razak since the event started in Sabah about two weeks ago.

Meanwhile, Nik Alfian's wife Maria Ti said she had sent her husband to the airport about 1.30pm for the filming assignment.

The couple was married about five months ago.

Maria, who works with a car dealer in Hotel Tiara, said she saw her husband hovering in the plane over her workplace shortly before the crash.

"He normally does this when he is in the air to let me know that he is working," she said.

Her husband had been flying for three years after graduating from the Mofaz Academy.

