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Mahathir-Fare

DOMESTIC AIR FARE STILL LOW, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

PUTRAJAYA, July 19 (Bernama) -- The domestic air fare charged by Malaysia Airlines (MAS) is still among the cheapest in the region even after the 51.8 per cent hike announced yesterday, the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"MAS' fare is one third of Garuda's (the Indonesian national carrier) domestic air fare. We are charging such a cheap rate," he said.

The government did not mind charging it cheap for the poor and this explained why there was no air fare hike for MAS flights to Sabah and Sarawak, he said.

It was also convinced that the people would still fly MAS even if the fare had gone up, Dr Mahathir told reporters after chairing the 11th National Information Technology Council meeting at his office here.

"It is nowhere near the domestic rate charged in other countries," he said.

Since MAS was incurring huge losses, "it was not fair to ask a commercial entity to subsidise the people...the government should subsidise," he said.

He said if the government no longer owned MAS, those owning it or have invested in the carrier, would definitely not subsidise the fare.

"So people should realise that in Malaysia charges are all very cheap, even the toll rates are cheap. In Malaysia we want the best of everything but we want to pay third class rate," he said.

The Cabinet at its meeting yesterday approved the fare hike but left it to MAS to decide on the effective date.

On the proposed amendment to the Federal Constitution during the current Parliament sitting, the prime minister indicated that it would only be a routine exercise without bringing about any radical changes.

"We want to make sure that voter registration is clear cut without any confusion and they are accepted by all," he said.

He said the government rejected automatic voter registration for those reaching the age of 21 because such a move would only leave room for a lot of phantom voter allegations.

-- BERNAMA

SR YBK AHH RYN