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Mahathir-Airlines

M'SIA TAKING PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES CONCERNING HIJACKERS, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 29 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the government has yet to see any threats including the hijacking of aircraft of Malaysian airlines but has taken some precautionary measures.

"At the moment, we don't see a threat for Malaysian airlines but we must be cautious," he told reporters after opening the 30th Gerakan delegates' conference here.

Dr Mahathir said that was why the airlines were taking insurance and other measures to look after the interest of air travellers.

He was responding to questions on whether the degree of threat of Malaysia Airlines (MAS) being hijacked is a concern.

Dr Mahathir said that a possible measure was to put air marshals in an aircraft to safeguard the safety of the passengers from the threat of hijackers.

"We have to study whether we can use air marshals or not but unfortunately, the people who build the aeroplanes do not seem to study the problem of terrorists," he said.

The Prime Minister said that that there should be an aeroplane designed to be "terrorist-proof."

Even though this sounds like a ridiculous idea, it could be done, he said.

"There are certain things that can be done instead of them just thinking and making aeroplanes for selling only," he said.

He said that aircraft-makers were more concerned with using fire-proof materials and others.

"Now we want a terrorist-proof aeroplane. I have a few ideas but I won't tell," he said.

Dr Mahathir also noted that there were signs that people were scared to travel by air after the Sept 11 terrorist attacks in the United States.

"At the moment, the number of passengers travelling on American airlines in America is down to 35 per cent and that means people are scared," he said.

The Prime Minister said that throughout the world, people could also become scared because hijackings of aircraft do not only occur in the US but also in other places, even in China and Taiwan.

-- BERNAMA

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